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MARCH 30, 2020



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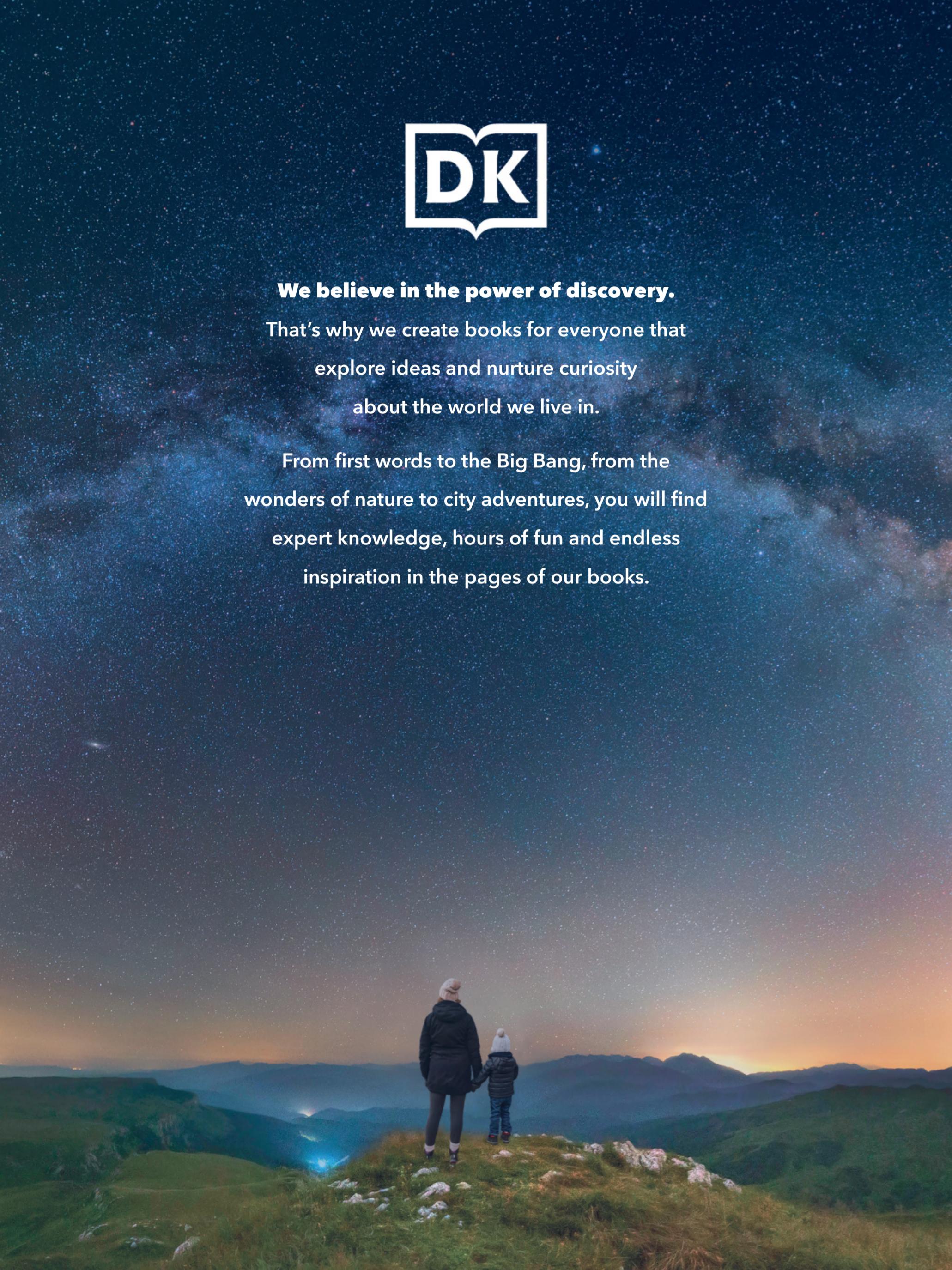
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Volume 267
Number 13
ISSN 0000-0019



March 30,
2020

FEATURES

19 Squad Goals

No longer relegated to the sidelines, sports titles by and about women take the field.

30 Homeland

In her new book of essays, novelist Laila Lalami asks what it truly means to be an American.

71-87 BookLife

In our latest self-publishing survey, a publisher warns indie authors about the downsides of big advances.

NEWS

4 Coronavirus Begins to Take a Toll

As the spread of Covid-19 continues, the ALA annual conference is canceled, more stores close, and disruptions ripple across the publishing industry.

6 Outbreak Sparks Digital Shift for Libraries

Public libraries are shuttering their physical locations to battle Covid-19 and are rapidly transferring budget dollars to e-books, digital audio, and other digital media to serve their communities.

10 Sales Down in Mid-March

Unit sales of print books fell 5% in the week ended March 21 compared to the similar week last year. A huge rise in juvenile and YA nonfiction sales was offset by a big decline in adult nonfiction sales.

11 A New Look for a New DK

The publisher is using an ongoing rebranding campaign to bring attention to its newest offerings.

12 Deals

Among the big books that sold this week are a true crime tale by a rural doctor, a new novel by three-time Edgar winner T. Jefferson Parker, and a poetry collection by a *Stranger Things* cast member.

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Contents

DEPARTMENTS & COLUMNS

18 Digital Perspectives

To get your staff to understand metadata better, try this game.

88 Soapbox by Vanessa Blakeslee

An author offers up sources writers can tap to help finance their next books.

BESTSELLERS

• Adult Hardcovers 14 • Adult Paperbacks 15

• Children's 16 • Apple Books 17

REVIEWS

Fiction

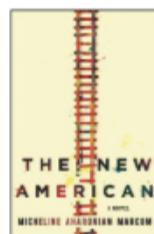
32 General Fiction

39 Mystery/Thriller

44 SF/Fantasy/Horror

47 Romance/Erotica

50 Comics



33
Boxed Review
The New American



40
Q&A with
Karen Lee Street



52
Q&A with
Paul M. Sutter

54
Boxed Review
The Greatest Beer Run Ever

66
Reviews Roundup
Picture books honor mothers

Nonfiction

51 General Nonfiction

63 Religion/Spirituality

Children's/YA

65 Picture Books

68 Fiction

70 Nonfiction





The Week in Publishing



Revenue at Penguin Random House rose 6.2% last year, to €3.64 billion, up from €3.42 billion in 2018. EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization) increased 6.3% over 2018, to €561 million. Acquisitions and organic growth all contributed to the gain. The U.S. accounted for 56% (roughly \$2.2 billion) of PRH's total sales.

Woody Allen's memoir, *Apropos of Nothing*, has been acquired by Arcade Publishing, an imprint of Skyhorse Publishing, which took world rights. Arcade released the title last week. The book had been dropped by Hachette Book Group after protests from the staff over HBG's intention to publish the memoir.

Woody Allen.
Apropos of Nothing.
Autobiography.

A high-profile First Amendment case filed by PEN America against President Trump can continue to trial. In a March 24 ruling, Judge Lorna Schofield dismissed four of PEN America's six claims against the president but held that the case could go forward on two claims related to press credentials and security clearances.

Online & On-Air

Children's Bookshelf

Books and games for children are on the rise in the wake of the new coronavirus, as schools close and children and parents stay at home. publishersweekly.com/games

Distributors' decision to shut down shipments of new comics as a result of the coronavirus outbreak and major comics publishers' efforts to work with creators and retailers under lockdown. publishersweekly.com/shutdown

The Week Ahead

PW senior writer Andrew Albanese runs down the latest developments in the publishing industry's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. publishersweekly.com/covid-19

KidsCast

Supriya Kelkar speaks about her new middle grade novel, *American as Paneer Pie*, and drawing inspiration from her experience as a first-generation Indian American. publishersweekly.com/paneer

More to Come

The hosts discuss Diamond Comic

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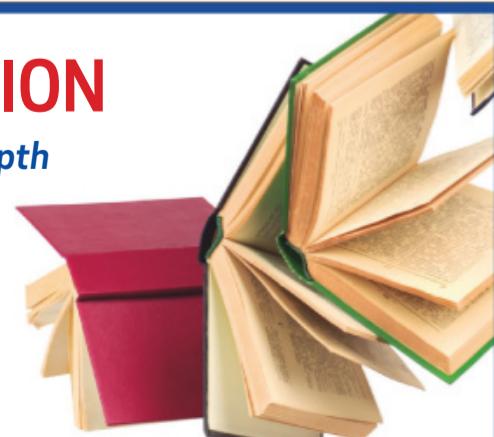
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with AEI Scholar Yuval Levin, **LIVE on In Depth**
Sunday, April 5, noon-2 pm ET

The American Enterprise Institute resident scholar and former policy analyst will take viewer questions and discuss his books, including *A Time to Build*, *The Fractured Republic* and *The Great Debate*.

Programming is subject to change



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The Coronavirus Begins to Take a Toll

As the outbreak continues, another conference is canceled, more stores close, and disruptions ripple across the publishing industry

With Covid-19 continuing to spread across the country, the impact of the disease is being felt acutely in most parts of the book publishing industry.

Among the developments last week, another major publishing conference was canceled. The American Library Association called off its annual conference and meeting, which was scheduled for June 25–30 in Chicago. “We recognize the magnitude of this decision for the association and our membership,” said ALA executive director Tracie D. Hall. “This year, we were especially looking forward to the conference taking place in ALA’s hometown of Chicago. However, the well-being of our library community, staff, and fellow Chicago residents has to be the number one concern, and that drove our decision-making.”

The ALA conference was canceled just days after the organization made another unprecedented announcement, in which it urged libraries to close to slow the spread of Covid-19.

The coronavirus pandemic had already led to the cancellation of the London Book Fair and the Bologna Children’s Book Fair. In addition, ReedPop was forced to move the dates of BookExpo and BookCon from late May to July 22–26. The organizer still plans to hold the event in New York City’s Javits Center. The change in dates was not enough to convince any of the Big Five New York publishers to attend, however. Penguin Random House had pulled out before the new dates were announced, and following the announcement, Hachette, HarperCollins, Macmillan, and Simon & Schuster all withdrew. In a statement, HC noted that “the current situation and the unpredictability of the coronavirus in the coming months” forced the publisher to “make the difficult decision to withdraw” from the events.

ReedPop executives said they plan to go ahead with the show. “We are working closely with the Javits Center to ensure the health and safety of our customers,” said event director Jenny Martin. “We are all doing the best we can during these times, and what that means for BookExpo is to work hard to provide the place that gives our customers the tools to bounce back from this.”

As book sales slow, publishers have taken steps to protect their cash flow. Skyhorse Publishing cut its staff by 30% last week, with founder and CEO Tony Lyons explaining that



Authors at a signing station on the show floor of the 2018 ALA Annual Conference.

given the circumstances he had no alternative. “We believe these staff cuts will enable us to continue to succeed as a company in the long run,” he told PW.

Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group CEO Jed Lyons opted to furlough most of his staff for two weeks (beginning March 23) rather than turn to layoffs. He said he believes the step is the most effective way to save the company’s cash flow.

Scholastic used a combination of furloughs, shortened work weeks, and voluntary unpaid leave to cut costs after the coronavirus outbreak led the publisher to revise its sales forecast downward in the quarter ending May 31. “We are implementing temporary staffing measures with staff across our U.S. organization, the majority of whom are located in 60 distribution centers and warehouses across the country,” said a spokesperson for the publisher, adding that Scholastic expects to resume normal operations soon.

Though the supply chain has held up fairly well, strains were beginning to show last week. Faced with a surge in demand for such items as household staples and health and medical goods, Amazon reduced its orders and extended its shipping times for other products, including books. Early last week, some books were showing a three-week delivery time.

And in response to the widespread closure of comics shops and distribution centers due to the pandemic, Diamond Comic Distributors, the largest distributor of comics in North America, has ceased the delivery of weekly published comics until further notice. Diamond will immediately stop the delivery of new comics with a release date of April 1 or later but will

continue to fulfill certain orders from publications already in its warehouses.

Shelter-in-place policies instituted in several states have contributed to a growing number of store closings. Barnes & Noble has temporarily closed about 400 of its outlets to foot traffic, though most of those stores are still offering curbside pickup for online orders. Many independent booksellers have also been forced to close their physical stores and have been looking for ways to adapt to the coronavirus world. Many have seen a surge in online sales and some are offering home delivery and curbside pickup to customers for online orders. With more states implementing edicts barring all but essential retail outlets from remaining open, booksellers have been applying for waivers to allow them to operate in some fashion.

Riverstone Books in Pittsburgh applied for an exemption from a March 19 Pennsylvania-wide order to close all businesses that are not “life-sustaining.” On March 23, the bookstore received that exemption and is continuing to take orders while offering curbside pickup and home delivery, along with free shipping. “We believe books are essential to life,” owner Barbara Jeremiah wrote to customers, informing them of the exemption.

At Avid Bookshop in Athens, Ga., owner Janet Geddis has seen a jump in online sales but is already preparing for circumstances to change. “I’m not sure how long business will be brisk, so I am sketching out various scenarios depending on what happens in the coming days, weeks, and months,” she said.

One good bit of good news was that unit sales of print books for the week ended March 21 were even with the previous week at outlets that report to NPD BookScan. A huge gain in unit sales in the juvenile nonfiction category helped to offset declines in adult nonfiction and juvenile fiction. Sales of adult fiction rose 4% over the previous week.

The 66% jump in juvenile nonfiction unit sales was led by the education/reference/language segment, where sales soared 186% over the previous week. Sales of games/activities/hobbies rose by 117%. Top titles were *My First Learn-to-Write Workbook* and *Paint by Sticker Kids*.

To move or not move

One of the thorniest questions facing publishers is whether to move release dates for titles set to be published over the next few months, given that many bookstores will be closed and opportunities for promoting the books will be nearly nonexistent. But delaying publication is not so easy, publishers and agents agreed.

“It’s kind of a nightmare changing pub dates,” said one high-level publicist at a major house, who requested ano-

nymity. Explaining that it’s tricky to reschedule a title even in normal times, the publicist noted that moving a lot of titles simultaneously isn’t feasible. With titles scheduled well into the fall, there are bandwidth issues—there won’t be staff available to market and promote titles moved from spring to fall, since they are already working on a full slate of fall books—and other, more practical issues. The publicist asked whether moving a pub date would even help, since no one knows how long the pandemic will go on. “It seems like this could be the new normal for awhile,” she said.

Among the major houses, S&S looks to be the one most aggressively moving titles into other months, or seasons, to avoid publishing during the coronavirus outbreak. Adam Rothberg, S&S’s senior v-p of corporate communications, estimated that the publisher has already moved about 145 of its adult titles. He said the house’s aim is to “maximize sales for each title we publish in the marketplace as it exists today.” On the issue of timing, Rothberg said S&S’s publishers are working with the sales and supply chain teams, as well as with authors and agents, to decide “which books can be successfully published by keeping to their original publication date, and which books will benefit from being moved.”

Jennifer Weltz, an agent at the Jean V. Naggar Literary Agency, said she has 12 books coming out before the end of May but added that there are too many unknowns to assume moving pub dates would help the situation. “The problem is that we don’t know how long this is going to go,” she noted. Instead of focusing on schedule shifts, Weltz is trying to be creative about promoting the titles coming out. “We’re really trying to figure out virtual events to bring people’s attention to the books. All publishers have been amazing. I find everybody is working hard, being supportive, understanding, and trying to innovate. Maybe I’m a Pollyanna, but that’s where I’m going with this.”

—Jim Milliot, with reporting by the PW staff

Call for Information

Feature: Romance Novels

Issue: June 1 **Deadline:** Apr. 10

Romance authors and publishers: how are you keeping your communities intact, and how are you supporting new books when traditional author tours and conventions aren’t an option? Separately: general interest publishers have increasingly been investing in LGBTQ romance, particularly in print for trade distribution. We’d like to hear about the LGBTQ romance novels you’re publishing in print, and whether recent economic constrictions have altered your plans. Pub dates: June through November. New titles only, please; no reprints. Email comments on background, title info, and links to cover art to features@publishersweekly.com by April 10 and put “Call for Info: Romance” in the subject line.

Covid-19 Outbreak Sparks Digital Shift for Public Libraries

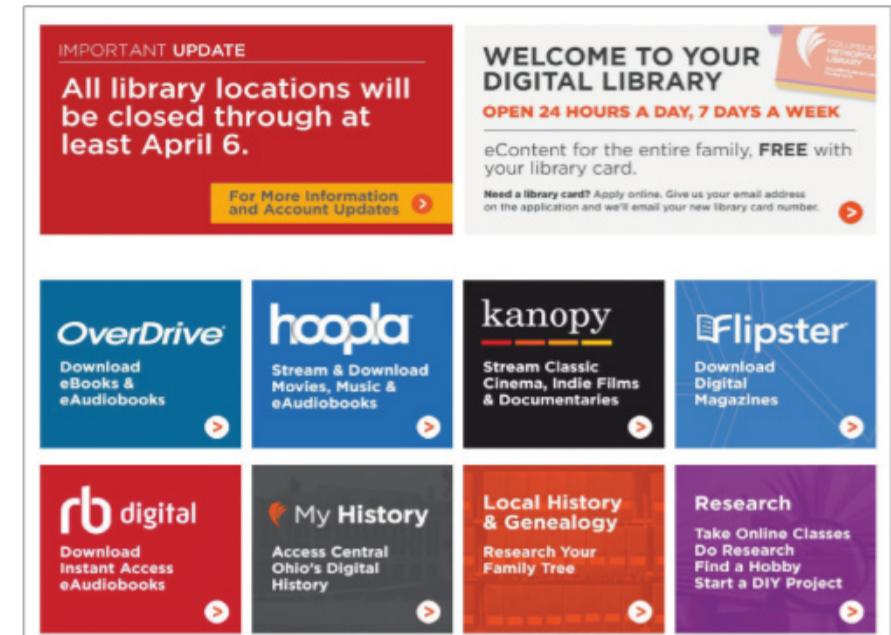
As libraries around the U.S. shutter their physical locations to battle the outbreak of Covid-19, they are rapidly transferring budget dollars to e-books, digital audio, and other digital media to serve their communities. And the shift could be a watershed moment for a digital library market where major publishers have thus far proceeded cautiously—and sometimes contentiously.

"The spending on digital resources we're seeing now is completely unprecedented," said Brian Kenney, a PW columnist and director of the White Plains (N.Y.) Public Library, which shut down its building on March 14 and has for now ceased all ordering of physical materials. "We are taking our remaining funds for this fiscal year, which ends June 30, about \$150,000, and spending them almost entirely on e-books and digital audio. Most of my colleagues in the Westchester Library System are doing the same. And what we are doing is not unusual—it's happening at libraries big and small throughout the country."

Catherine Mason, catalogue and serials manager for the Columbus (Ohio) Metropolitan Library, said her library and its consortium—the Digital Downloads Collaboration (which managed three million digital lends for its members in 2019)—has doubled its budget for library e-book provider OverDrive in response to the crisis and also increased budgets with other providers, including Hoopla and Kanopy. The Columbus library is also using social media posts to push RBdigital's Unlimited Audiobooks, which are simultaneously available to library patrons.

Dianne Coan, a division director for the Fairfax County (Va.) Public Library, reported that her library has boosted digital spending as well. "We almost always shift big chunks of un-earmarked money to our digital assets, so that part is normal," Coan observed. "The speed at which this was done, and the options available, is not."

Library vendors, meanwhile, are working hard to meet the surge. "Every single day we are crossing into new record territory," said Steve Potash, CEO for OverDrive, the leading e-book provider for libraries. "If I gave you data for today it would be old news by tomorrow. Every day for the last week we've had record days: record days for checkouts, record days for circulation, record days for holds, record days for the number of first-time users, record days for downloads and installation of the Libby app."



The homepage of the Columbus (Ohio) Metropolitan Library tells a story familiar to many libraries around the country: as physical libraries close in response to the Covid-19 outbreak, digital library services are taking center stage.

Jeff Jankowski, founder and CEO of Hoopla, said his company is also seeing a massive increase in usage across the board. "Librarians have been rushing to increase the strength of their digital collections in order to serve their communities," he added, noting that Hoopla partner libraries are increasing borrow limits and that more libraries are adding Hoopla as a new service.

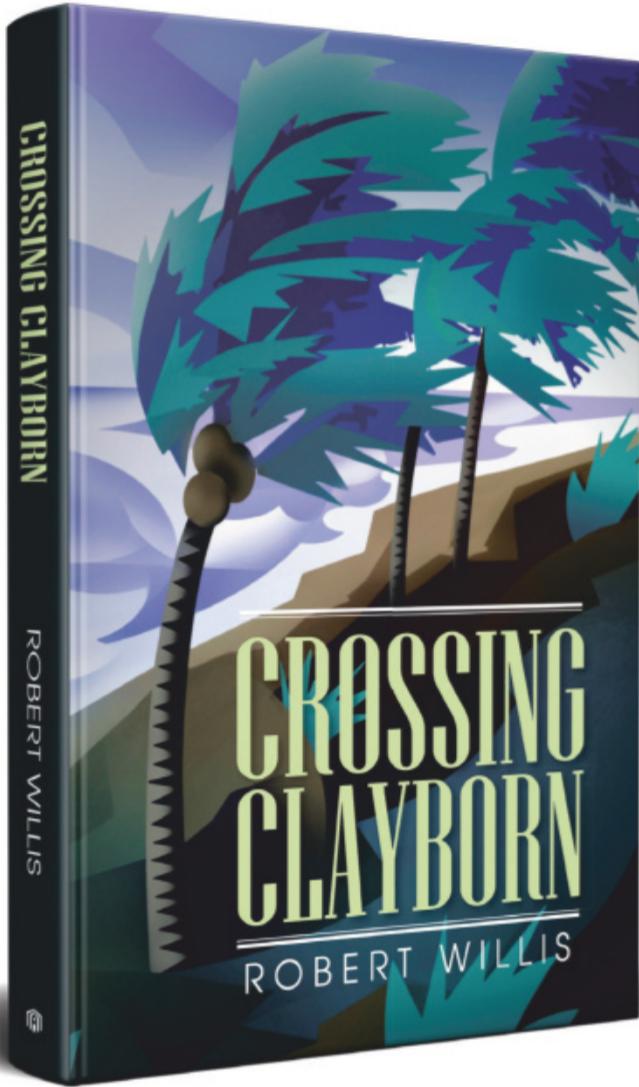
Meanwhile, following a contentious 18 months during which all of the Big Five publishers raised prices for and imposed new restrictions on digital lending in public libraries, the Covid-19 crisis has prompted a number of publishers to relax e-lending terms, at least for now. The most prominent change came on March 17, when Macmillan abandoned its controversial embargo on new-release e-books in libraries and began temporarily lowering prices on some titles.

HarperCollins, which already offers what many librarians consider to be the most agreeable digital license terms, announced this week that it is adding 800 frontlist and 300 backlist e-book titles to its cost-per-circulation (CPC) catalogue, with more to come. In addition, the publisher is offering a 30% discount on a select list of 1,000 e-books through June 1.

And for the next 90 days, Penguin Random House is offering libraries the option to license e-books and digital audio for one-year terms at a 50% prorated price as an alternative to the existing two-year term (for e-books) or perpetual access (for digital audio). A CPC model is also being made available.

continued on p. 10

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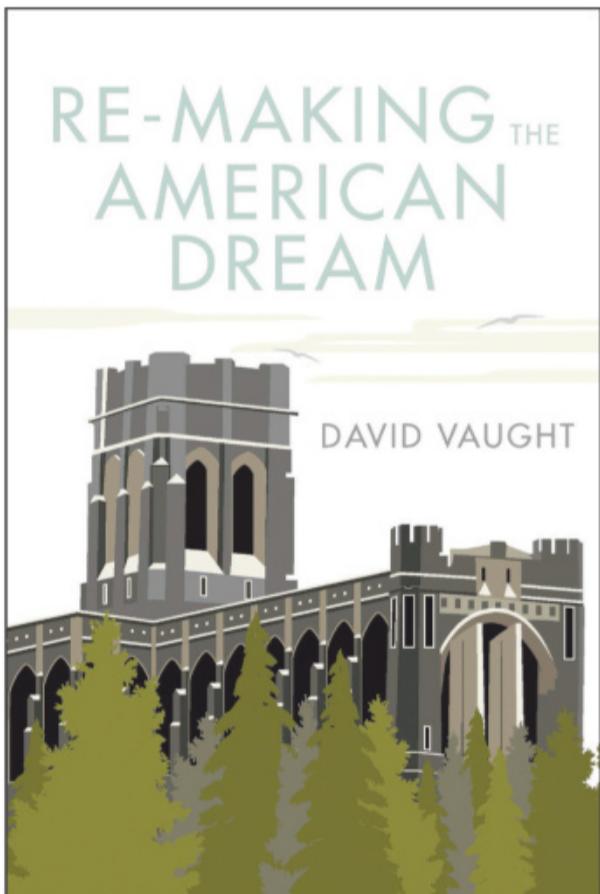
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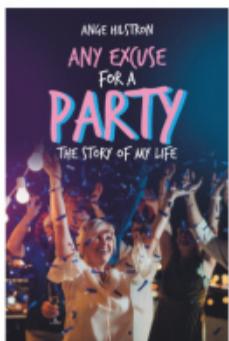
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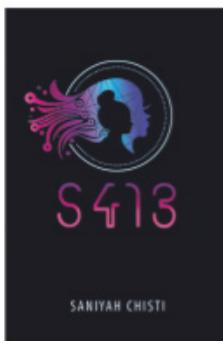
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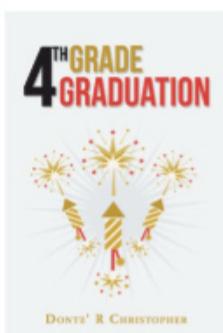
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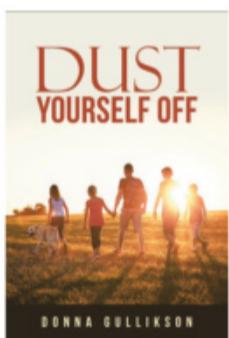
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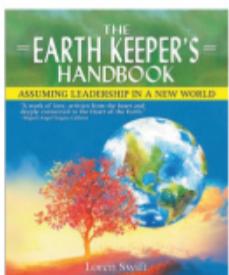
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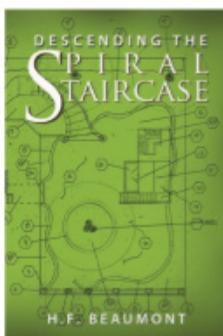
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The Weekly Scorecard

Print Unit Sales Fell 5% in Mid-March

Unit sales of print books fell 5% in the week ended Mar. 21, 2020, compared to the similar week in 2019, at outlets that report to NPD BookScan. A huge rise in juvenile and YA nonfiction sales was offset by a big decline in adult nonfiction sales. The 79% jump in juvenile nonfiction was due to a surge in demand for educational and activity books children can use at home. *My First Learn-to-Write Workbook* by Crystal Radke was tops in the category, which sold nearly 30,000 copies. Workman's *Paint by Number Kids* was second in the category, with more than 21,000 copies sold. Three Workman Brian Quest titles also made the top 10 category list, selling a total of about 39,000 copies. Adult fiction sales rose 2.2% over the week ended Mar. 23, 2019. While *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens was #1 on the category list, selling more than 27,000 copies, two new titles landed in the third and fourth spots: *The Boy from the Woods* by Harlan Coben was #3, with more than 22,000 copies sold, and *The Rise of Skywalker* by Rae Carson was next, with just under 15,000 copies sold. Three titles with sales of more than 4,000 copies helped boost unit sales in YA nonfiction by 56.9% over the similar week in 2019. *Stamped* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi was #1, followed by *Live* by Sadie Robertson. At #3 was *The World of Flowers* by Johanna Basford, the adult coloring book that long has been misclassified as a YA nonfiction title (two other Basford books were in the YA top 10). Board books had a big decline in the week, plunging 37.9% from the similar week in 2019.

TOTAL SALES OF PRINT BOOKS (IN THOUSANDS)

	MAR. 23, 2019	MAR. 21, 2020	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Total	11,747	11,160	-5.0%	0.2%

UNIT SALES OF PRINT BOOKS BY CATEGORY (IN THOUSANDS)

	MAR. 23, 2019	MAR. 21, 2020	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Adult Nonfiction	5,024	3,800	-24.1%	-1.1%
Adult Fiction	2,864	2,313	2.2%	0.7%
Juvenile Nonfiction	1,049	1,879	79.0%	11.9%
Juvenile Fiction	2,829	2,634	-6.9%	-0.6%
Young Adult Fiction	360	364	1.1%	-6.4%
Young Adult Nonfiction	37	58	56.9%	19.7%

UNIT SALES OF PRINT BOOKS BY FORMAT (IN THOUSANDS)

	MAR. 23, 2019	MAR. 21, 2020	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Hardcover	3,481	2,720	-21.9%	-2.0%
Trade Paperback	6,299	6,856	8.9%	0.2%
Mass Market Paperback	794	680	-14.4%	-10.5%
Board Books	820	512	-37.9%	-6.8%



SOURCE: NPD BOOKSCAN AND PUBLISHERS WEEKLY. NPD'S U.S. CONSUMER MARKET PANEL COVERS APPROXIMATELY 80% OF THE PRINT BOOK MARKET AND CONTINUES TO GROW.

News

continued from p. 6

Coan said PRH's one-year-license option is proving to be "super useful" as the library tries to keep the holds list manageable—and she'd like to see it become a permanent option.

Carmi Parker, ILS administrator for the Whatcom County (Wash.) Library System agreed. "We've got 60-plus people waiting for the latest Joe Pickett mystery by C.J. Box, and normally we would buy eight or nine more copies under the 24-month license," she explained. "Now, theoretically, we can buy 16–18 copies for the same price with a 12-month license and get folks through the holds queue twice as fast."

Though the crisis is far from over, and the publishers' moves are short-term responses to temporary library closures, it's not too early to start thinking about how this rapid digital shift might inform a new, more productive approach to the digital library market, long term. "In my opinion, one of the issues libraries face in the digital realm is that the publishers are so deeply invested in 20th-century models," Parker said. "I am hoping this helps shake them out of that. This opportunity to experiment with different models means that when we start talking again with publishers about how e-lending can work best for all of us, we will have some new data to go on."

Kenney said he too thinks about the potential long term impact. "We're providing virtual reference service 30 hours a week. We licensed Zoom and will be rolling out 20 programs in April, from book discussions to story times and Reiki workshops. We've revamped our website to highlight our digital content. We're pushing out two e-newsletters a week—one for adults, one for kids—filled with recommendations for what to read or listen to or view. And people are responding. We are bringing a lot of people online, and it's turning out to be a good experience for them. My guess is that many will want to stay there."

Potash noted he's been gratified by the more than three dozen publishers so far who have stepped up to offer reduced-cost and, in some cases, free access to digital content to libraries and schools during this time of need. But the sheer magnitude of the shift, which could reach "tens of millions" of new digital library users, he suggested, does portend changes that will almost certainly extend beyond the crisis. "This is unprecedented," he said. "I think digital library lending and services are being elevated to a new plateau. It's obviously not going to grow at this pace consistently. But it's going to the next level."

—Andrew Albanese

A New Look for a New DK

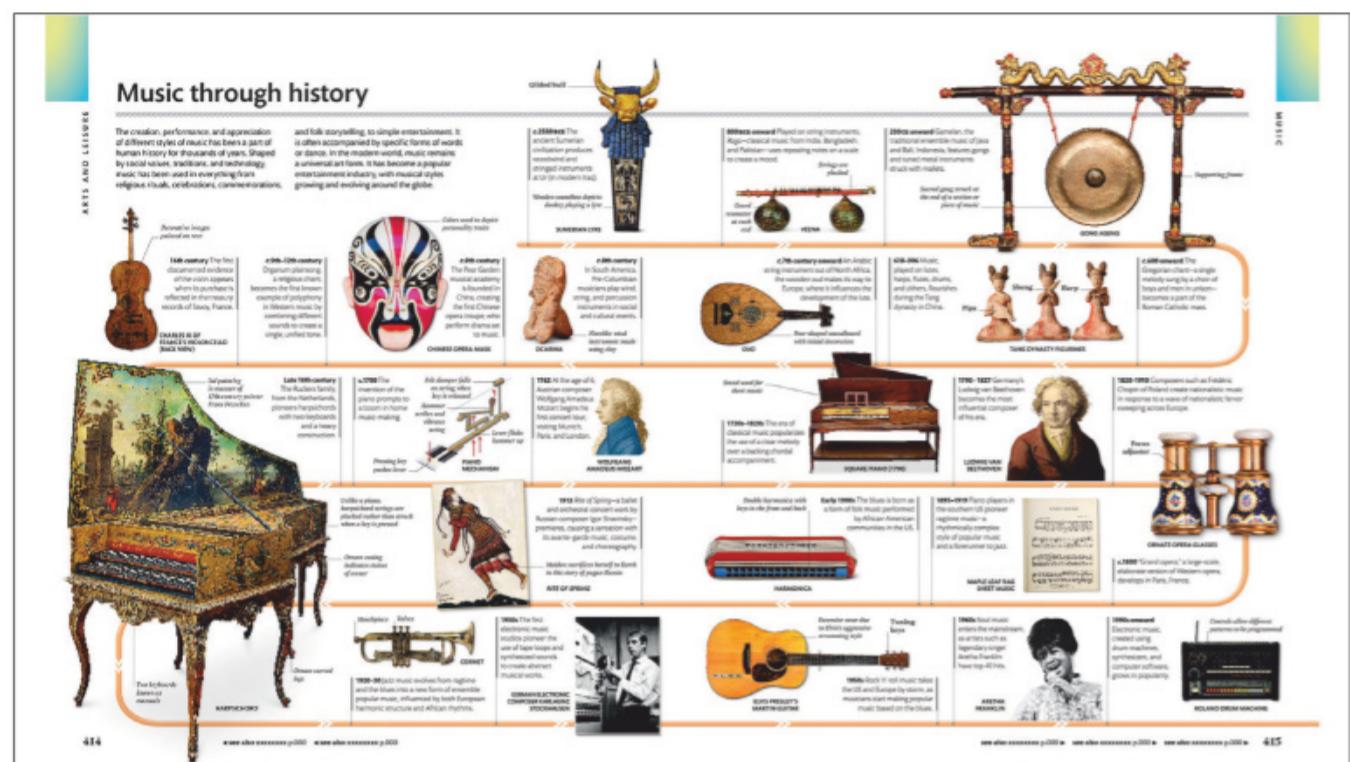
DK is one of the few publishing brands that is recognized by consumers, so when the company set out to give a new look to its logo as part of a brand redesign, executives didn't want to stray too far from tradition. "DK is a heritage brand," said Rebecca Smart, managing director, publishing for DK, in an interview at the company's New York City office in February. "But it needed to be freshened up." The rebranding campaign, announced in late January, will see the logo appear on reprinted and new DK titles beginning in the middle of the year.

Smart said the rebranding effort is coming at the right time for the company. The Penguin Random House division has just posted three years of profit growth—a turnaround engineered by Ian Hudson, who took over as CEO in June 2017 and then handed the reins to Carsten Coesfeld on March 9. Hudson brought in a number of new people, including Smart, who joined DK from Ebury in January 2019. The current DK is also more streamlined, as Hudson sold Rough Guides to APA in 2017 and closed the Prima Games division in early 2019.

DK is based in London, but with offices in eight countries and publishing in 68 languages, it is very much a global publisher, and that continues to influence its publishing. In the children's group, for example, DK editors are looking for books that entire families can enjoy in all of its markets. And while much of DK's list is still generated by ideas from its editors, it is publishing more "author-led" titles, Smart said. "We've also become more nimble," she noted.

Last year DK published *The CBD Oil Solution*, and though initial sales were a little slow, as interest in all things CBD has continued to increase so have sales of the book, said Mary Marotta, senior v-p, North America for DK.

A new addition to DK's children's group is fiction. The Secret Explorers is a series slated to launch in July and aimed at reluctant readers ages seven to nine. It features characters



Redesigned interior pages of the upcoming *The Visual Encyclopedia*.



in action-driven adventures. The series is in keeping with DK's goal to "entertain and inspire."

Nothing is more fundamental to DK than its use of photography in its books, but the company has been adding illustrations to many of its books as well. DK had early success with *The Wonders of Nature*, which has illustrations, as well as more statistics than the company has typically included in its books, Marotta said. *Wonders* has sold more than 200,000 copies worldwide. DK is also giving a fresh design to its new edition of *The Visual Encyclopedia*, which is set for global release in October. All other titles in the Visual Encyclopedia line will also feature the new design when they are updated, Marotta added.

The U.S. remains DK's biggest market, and within America the trade channel is its largest channel. But Marotta said the company is looking to increase its presence in the library and education markets, including gaining course adoptions in high school and college markets.

DK has also entered the fast-growing audio publishing market. Its list is developed in the U.K. and currently available in English only. The company has released about 100 titles, and Marotta noted DK will add to the list as titles become available.

Though DK has been publishing for nearly 45 years, Smart said that as its recent actions have shown, the company will continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of its customers.

—Jim Milliot

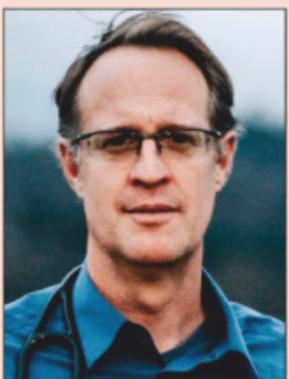
DEALS

By Rachel Deahl

DEAL OF THE WEEK

■ Ballantine Hires Gilmer's 'Gilmer'

After an auction, Ballantine's **Emily Hartley** won **Benjamin Gilmer's** *The Other Dr. Gilmer*. Calling the book "part true crime investigation, part medical mystery, and part social justice crusade," the publisher said the title chronicles a physician's realization, after accepting a job in rural North Carolina, that a previous doctor, sharing his name, went to prison. The publisher went on, "Obsessed with finding out how this beloved community member could become a killer, he discovers that the other Dr. Gilmer has a serious medical condition and



Gilmer

launches into a quest to 'heal crime' and address the huge mental health problem in our prison system." The book, sold in a North American rights agreement by **Lara Love Hardin** at Idea Architects, is expanded from a story Gilmer told in a 2013 episode of *This American Life*, which, per Ballantine, has been downloaded 10 millions times.



Pearl

■ Pearl's 'Trials' Taken Up at Knopf

For Knopf, **Andrew Miller** nabbed North American rights to **Lisa Pearl's** nonfiction work *Trials of War*. **E.J. McCarthy**, who has an eponymous shingle, represented the author, calling the book "a definitive account of the largest war crimes prosecution effort in American history—the U.S. Army's war crimes trials program in Germany." In the book, Pearl, the former director of national operations at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, traces the experiences of various figures involved in what are known as the Dachau trials, which included 460 trials, with more than 1,600 defendants, that took place between 1945 and 1947.

■ Tor Gets Sunny with Parker's 'California Boy'

Three-time Edgar winner and bestseller **T. Jefferson Parker** sold *California Boy* to Tor/Forge in a six-figure deal. **Kristin Sevick** and **Linda Quinton** bought world English rights to the novel, at auction, from **Mark Gottlieb** and **Robert Gottlieb** at Trident Media Group. The agents, comparing the book to Emma Cline's *The Girls*, Delia Owens's *Where the Crawdads Sing*, and Quentin Tarantino's *Once upon a Time*



Parker

in Hollywood, said it follows a young man's search for his missing sister that "takes him into the bright, beautiful heart of Southern California in the Roaring '60s... and also into its decadent heart of darkness." A second, currently untitled thriller was included in the deal. *California Boy* is slated for fall 2021.

■ Catapult Wraps Wenzel's 'Coils'

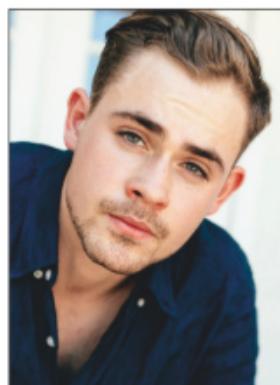
German playwright **Olivia Wenzel's** *1,000 Coils of Fear* was bought, in a North American rights agreement, by Catapult's **Jonathan Lee** and **Wah-Ming Chang**. **Markus Hoffmann** at Regal Hoffmann & Associates said the novel, told in the form of a q&a with the narrator and her alter ego, is "a clear-sighted, witty, and polyphonic investigation into origins and belonging... and the freedoms and fears that being the odd one out brings." The book, which has been acquired in the U.K. at auction, is set for a 2022 release from Catapult.



Wenzel

■ Neil Shows Bloomsbury Her 'Chutzpah'

Bloomsbury's **Allison Moore** pre-empted world rights to **Haley Neil's** YA novel *Once More with Chutzpah*. **Lauren Spieller** at Triada US handled the two-book, world rights agreement. Bloomsbury said the novel "explores cultural, religious, and sexual identity as an anxious high school senior and her twin set off on a whirlwind trip through Israel." Bloomsbury added that the novel, slated for fall 2021, was pitched as "Becky Albertalli meets Birthright."



Neil

■ Montgomery to McMeel

Dacre Montgomery, who played Billy Hargrove in the Netflix series *Stranger Things*, sold a currently untitled book of poetry to **Patty Rice** at Andrews McMeel. **Richard Abate** and **Rachel Kim** at 3 Arts Entertainment handled the world rights sale for the book, which is slated for fall 2020.

Behind the Bestsellers MARCH 15–21, 2020

BY CAROLYN JURIS

Home Sweet Homeschool

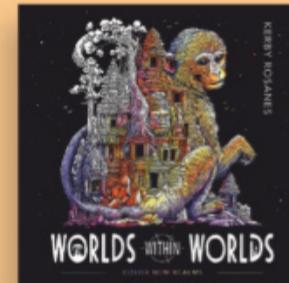
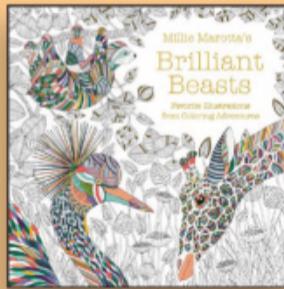
As day care centers and schools in the areas of the country hardest hit by coronavirus shut down, children's books with educational angles surged in popularity. My First Learn-to-Write Workbook is the #1 book in the country and #1 in the Northeast and on the West Coast, with overall print unit sales up 264% compared to the week before. Elsewhere, D&D: Explorer's Guide to Wildemount captured the East North Central region's attention; YouTuber James Rallison's The Odd 1s Out: The First Sequel climbed to the top of the Mountain region, and Where the Crawdads Sing serenaded the rest.



Crayon and On

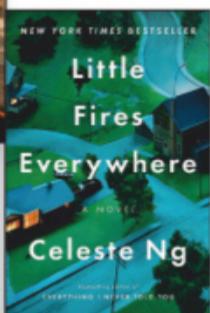
Kerby Rosanes, whose *Animorphia* has sold 276K print copies, returns with *Worlds Within Worlds*, debuting this week at #6 in trade paper.

Another coloring book stalwart, Millie Marotta, saw sales of *Brilliant Beasts* more than double compared with the previous week, landing the title on our trade paper list for the first time, at #16.



TV WATCH

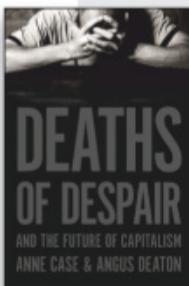
Reese Witherspoon's Hulu adaption of Celeste Ng's *Little Fires Everywhere* dropped March 18, and tie-ins pubbed the day before. The mass market tie-in debuts at #8 on that list, and while the trade paper tie-in fell short of charting, the 2019 trade paperback is up 95%, leaping nine spots to #3 in the country.



NEW & NOTABLE

DEATHS OF DESPAIR AND THE FUTURE OF CAPITALISM

Anne Case and Angus Deaton #19 Hardcover Nonfiction Two Princeton economists—Deaton is also a Nobel Prize winner—explain how capitalism as practiced in the U.S. devastates the working class. "We believe in capitalism," they write in the preface. But "if governments are unwilling to exercise compulsion over health insurance and to take the power to control costs, tragedies are inevitable."



TOP 10 OVERALL

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	UNITS
1	My First Learn-to-Write Workbook	Crystal Radke	Rockridge	29,518
2	Where the Crawdads Sing	Delia Owens	Putnam	27,605
3	Little Fires Everywhere	Celeste Ng	Penguin Books	26,804
4	D&D: Explorer's Guide to Wildemount	—	Wizards of the Coast	26,589
5	Untamed	Glennon Doyle	Dial	25,344
6	The Odd 1s Out: The First Sequel	James Rallison	TarcherPerigee	23,210
7	The Boy from the Woods	Harlan Coben	Grand Central	22,359
8	Paint by Sticker Kids: Zoo Animals	—	Workman	21,549
9	Big First Grade	—	School Zone	20,154
10	The Splendid and the Vile	Erik Larson	Crown	18,488

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Hardcover Frontlist Fiction

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	—	The Boy from the Woods	Harlan Coben	Grand Central	9781538748145	22,359
2	—	Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker	Rae Carson	Del Rey	9780593128404	14,953
3	3	American Dirt	Jeanine Cummins	Flatiron	9781250209764	13,951
4	1	The Mirror & the Light	Hilary Mantel	Holt	9780805096606	11,988
5	—	Smoke Bitten	Patricia Briggs	Ace	9780440001553	11,931
6	—	The Jerusalem Assassin	Joel C. Rosenberg	Tyndale	9781496437846	10,570
7	6	Blindside	Patterson/Born	Little, Brown	9780316420334	10,221
8	10	In Five Years	Rebecca Serle	Atria	9781982137441	9,368
9	5	The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse	Charlie Mackesy	HarperOne	9780062976581	9,111
10	2	Journey of the Pharaohs	Clive Cussler	Putnam	9780593083086	8,833
11	4	The Numbers Game	Danielle Steel	Delacorte	9780399179563	8,045
12	7	House of Earth and Blood	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781635574043	7,187
13	8	My Dark Vanessa	Kate Elizabeth Russell	Morrow	9780062941503	6,934
14	9	Long Range	C.J. Box	Putnam	9780525538233	6,558
15	—	Hit List	Stuart Woods	Putnam	9780593083222	6,460
16	14	The Giver of Stars	Jojo Moyes	Viking/Dorman	9780399562488	5,944
17	11	A Good Neighborhood	Therese Anne Fowler	St. Martin's	9781250237279	4,934
18	18	The Guardians	John Grisham	Doubleday	9780385544184	4,823
19	12	The Dutch House	Ann Patchett	Harper	9780062963673	4,628
20	17	Such a Fun Age	Kiley Reid	Putnam	9780525541905	4,156

Hardcover Frontlist Nonfiction

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	—	D&D: Explorer's Guide to Wildemount	—	Wizards of the Coast	9780786966912	26,589
2	1	Untamed	Glennon Doyle	Dial	9781984801258	25,344
3	5	The Splendid and the Vile	Erik Larson	Crown	9780385348713	18,488
4	4	Find Your Path	Carrie Underwood	Dey Street	9780062690913	10,741
5	7	Open Book	Jessica Simpson	Dey Street	9780062899965	8,236
6	3	The Gift of Forgiveness	Katherine Schwarzenegger Pratt	Viking/Dorman	9781984878250	6,447
7	—	Marketing Made Simple	Donald Miller	HarperCollins Leadership	9781400203796	6,326
8	2	Get Out of Your Own Way	Dave Hollis	HarperCollins Leadership	9781400215423	5,236
9	27	Dangerous Prayers	Craig Groeschel	Zondervan	9780310343127	4,639
10	—	The Genius Life	Max Lugavere	Harper Wave	9780062892812	4,438
11	8	Get Out of Your Head	Jennie Allen	WaterBrook	9781601429643	4,431
12	12	John Adams Under Fire	Abrams/Fisher	Hanover Square	9781335015921	4,329
13	—	The Art of Cuphead	Studio MDHR	Dark Horse	9781506713205	3,496
14	13	Unknown Valor	Martha MacCallum	Harper	9780062853851	3,039
15	—	Faith, Family & the Feast	Rollins/Rollins	HMH/Martin	9780358124498	3,014
16	22	Talking to Strangers	Malcolm Gladwell	Little, Brown	9780316478526	2,887
17	—	How to Be an Artist	Jerry Saltz	Riverhead	9780593086469	2,691
18	19	The Hope of Glory	Jon Meacham	Convergent	9780593236666	2,628
19	—	Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism	Case/Deaton	Princeton Univ.	9780691190785	2,610
20	11	The Ultimate Retirement Guide for 50+	Suze Orman	Hay House	9781401959920	2,372

LW: rank last week

**Mass Market Frontlist**

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	Window on the Bay	Debbie Macomber	Ballantine	9780399181351	9,364
2	3	Liar Liar	Patterson/Fox	Grand Central	9781538730775	7,550
3	2	Long Road to Mercy	David Baldacci	Grand Central	9781538761540	7,255
4	4	Celtic Empire	Cussler/Cussler	Putnam	9780735219014	5,418
5	5	Longing for Yesterday	Debbie Macomber	Mira	9780778309505	4,579
6	6	Blessing in Disguise	Danielle Steel	Dell	9780399179341	4,404
7	9	The Night Window	Dean Koontz	Bantam	9780525484899	3,980
8	–	Little Fires Everywhere (TV tie-in)	Celeste Ng	Penguin Books	9780143135661	3,781
9	11	The Big Kahuna	Evanovich/Evanovich	Putnam	9780525535645	3,622
10	8	Chasing Cassandra	Lisa Kleypas	Avon	9780062371942	3,359
11	12	The Cliff House	RaeAnne Thayne	HQN	9781335080455	3,340
12	7	Rope Burn	William W. Johnstone	Pinnacle	9780786044306	3,243
13	13	Home Sweet Home	Fern Michaels	Zebra	9781420146097	3,123
14	15	Ambush	Patterson/Born	Grand Central	9781538713860	3,072
15	–	An Amish Easter Wish	Jo Ann Brown	Love Inspired	9781335488053	3,070
16	–	Left to Die	Rita Herron	Harlequin Intrigue	9781335136404	2,996
17	10	The Backstabbers	William W. Johnstone	Pinnacle	9780786044344	2,984
18	–	The Amish Nurse's Suitor	Carrie Lighte	Love Inspired	9781335488060	2,880
19	–	What She Did	Barb Han	Harlequin Intrigue	9781335136411	2,861
20	–	48 Hour Lockdown	Carla Cassidy	Harlequin Intrigue	9781335136398	2,649

Trade Paperback Frontlist

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	Little Fires Everywhere	Celeste Ng	Penguin Books	9780735224315	26,804
2	–	The Odd 1s Out: The First Sequel	James Rallison	TarcherPerigee	9780593087633	23,210
3	2	The Hunting Party	Lucy Foley	Morrow	9780062868916	8,692
4	3	Normal People	Sally Rooney	Hogarth	9781984822185	8,170
5	–	Learn to Read	–	Modern Kid	9781948209540	7,962
6	–	Worlds Within Worlds	Kerby Rosanes	Plume	9780593086230	7,558
7	4	The Inn	Patterson/Fox	Grand Central	9781538715444	7,348
8	6	Lost Boy Found	Kirsten Alexander	Grand Central	9781538700563	6,008
9	11	Before We Were Yours	Lisa Wingate	Ballantine	9780425284704	5,736
10	8	The Outsider	Stephen King	Gallery	9781982148249	5,710
11	7	Unsolved	Patterson/Ellis	Grand Central	9781538731635	5,253
12	5	Lost Roses	Martha Hall Kelly	Ballantine	9781524796396	5,111
13	16	The Wives	Tarryn Fisher	Graydon House	9781525809781	4,980
14	12	Official SAT Study Guide 2020 Edition	–	College Board	9781457312199	4,925
15	19	Every Breath	Nicholas Sparks	Grand Central	9781538728543	4,719
16	55	Millie Marotta's Brilliant Beasts	Millie Marotta	Lark	9781454711100	4,424
17	9	One Good Deed	David Baldacci	Grand Central	9781538750582	4,304
18	10	Summer of '69	Elin Hilderbrand	Back Bay	9780316420006	4,275
19	13	The Overstory	Richard Powers	Norton	9780393356687	4,235
20	20	The Great Alone	Kristin Hannah	Griffin	9781250229533	3,824

LW: rank last week

Children's Frontlist Fiction

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	Fetch-22 (Dog Man #8)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9781338323214	15,670
2	Wrecking Ball (Diary of a Wimpy Kid #14)	Jeff Kinney	Amulet	9781419739033	15,092
3	Chain of Gold (The Last Hours #1)	Cassandra Clare	McElderry	9781481431873	10,218
4	For Whom the Ball Rolls (Dog Man #7)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9781338236590	9,194
5	Master of Disaster (Middle School #12)	Patterson/Tebbetts	LB/Patterson	9780316420495	6,248
6	Dragonslayer (Wings of Fire: Legends #2)	Tui T. Sutherland	Scholastic Press	9781338214604	6,132
7	Karen's Witch (Baby-Sitters Little Sister #1)	Martin/Farina	Graphix	9781338315196	5,334
8	Tales from a Not-So-Best Friend Forever (Dork Diaries #14)	Rachel Renée Russell	Aladdin	9781534427204	5,333
9	Diary of an Awesome Friendly Kid	Jeff Kinney	Amulet	9781419740275	5,167
10	The Bookwanderers (Pages & Co. #1)	Anna James	Puffin	9781984837141	4,700
11	The Bad Guys in the Baddest Day Ever	Aaron Blabey	Scholastic	9781338305845	4,358
12	FGTeeV Presents: Into the Game!	FGTeeV	HarperAlley	9780062933676	4,184
13	The Twin	Natasha Preston	Delacorte	9780593124963	3,898
14	Captain Underpants and the Terrifying Return...	Dav Pilkey	Scholastic	9781338347210	3,777
15	One of Us Is Next	Karen M. McManus	Delacorte	9780525707967	3,764
16	Boy-Crazy Stacey (Baby-Sitters Club #7)	Martin/Galligan	Graphix	9781338304510	3,475
17	Pax	Sara Pennypacker	HC/Balzer + Bray	9780062377029	3,365
18	InvestiGators	John Patrick Green	First Second	9781250219954	3,256
19	A Good Girl's Guide to Murder	Holly Jackson	Delacorte	9781984896360	2,950
20	The Girl Who Drank the Moon	Kelly Barnhill	Algonquin	9781616207465	2,937
21	Ali Cross	James Patterson	LB/Patterson	9780316530415	2,921
22	The Tyrant's Tomb (The Trials of Apollo #4)	Rick Riordan	Disney-Hyperion	9781484746448	2,866
23	The Last Kids on Earth and the Midnight Blade	Max Brallier	Viking	9780425292112	2,817
24	The Conference of the Birds (Miss Peregrine's Peculiar Children #5)	Ransom Riggs	Dutton	9780735231504	2,748
25	P.S. I Still Love You (movie tie-in)	Jenny Han	Simon & Schuster	9781534469266	2,629

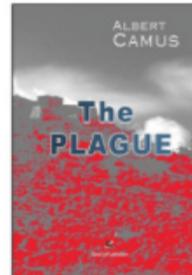
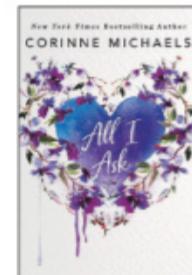
Children's Picture Books

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	Little Blue Truck's Springtime	Schertle/McElmurry	HMH	9780544938090	13,424
2	Pete the Cat: Big Easter Adventure	Dean/Dean	HarperFestival	9780062198679	12,409
3	It's Not Easy Being a Bunny	Sadler/Bollen	Random House	9780394861029	9,102
4	Happy Easter, Mouse!	Numeroff/Bond	HC/Balzer + Bray	9780694014224	8,260
5	Green Eggs and Ham	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780394800165	8,256
6	Hippity, Hoppity, Little Bunny	—	Cottage Door	9781680524772	7,941
7	You're My Little Honey Bunny	Natalie Marshall	Silver Dolphin	9781684126187	7,689
8	One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780394800134	7,553
9	The Berenstain Bears and the Easter Story	Berenstain/Berenstain	Zonderkidz	9780310720874	7,506
10	Oh, the Places You'll Go!	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780679805274	6,589
11	There's No Place Like Space	Rabe/Ruiz	Random House	9780679891154	5,621
12	The Very Hungry Caterpillar	Eric Carle	Philomel	9780399226908	5,506
13	The Great Eggscape!	John/Oswald	HarperCollins	9780062975676	5,207
14	If Animals Kissed Good Night	Paul/Walker	FSG	9780374300210	4,905
15	How to Catch the Easter Bunny	Wallace/Elkerton	Sourcebooks	9781492638179	4,872
16	The Wonky Donkey	Smith/Cowley	Scholastic	9780545261241	4,793
17	The Cat in the Hat	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780394800011	4,790
18	What Should Danny Do?	Adir Levy	Elon	9780692848388	4,674
19	Dr. Seuss's ABC	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780679882817	4,644
20	Fox in Socks	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780394800387	4,602
21	Peppa's Easter Egg Hunt	Eone	Scholastic	9781338327847	4,430
22	Llama Llama Easter Egg	Anna Dewdney	Viking	9780451469823	4,416
23	Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?	Martin/Carle	Holt	9780805047905	4,311
24	Never Touch a Dinosaur	—	Make Believe	9781785989452	3,922
25	What Pet Should I Get?	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780525707356	3,889



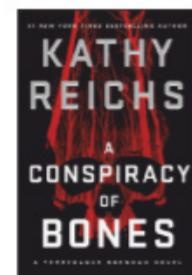
Fiction & Literature

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN
1	Hit List	Stuart Woods	Putnam	9780593083246
2	Little Fires Everywhere	Celeste Ng	Penguin Books	9780735224308
3	In Five Years	Rebecca Serle	Atria	9781982137465
4	Where the Crawdads Sing	Delia Owens	Putnam	9780735219113
5	American Dirt	Jeanine Cummins	Flatiron	9781250209771
6	Who Do You Love	Jennifer Weiner	Atria	9781451617832
7	Dune	Frank Herbert	Ace	9781101658055
8	Journey of the Pharaohs	Cussler/Brown	Putnam	9780593083093
9	Leaving Time	Jodi Picoult	Ballantine	9780345544933
10	All I Ask	Corinne Michaels	Forever	9781538745663
11	Triple	Ken Follett	Penguin Books	9780698406292
12	The Dutch House	Ann Patchett	Harper	9780062963697
13	The Vacationers	Emma Straub	Riverhead	9781101618042
14	My Dark Vanessa	Kate Elizabeth Russell	Morrow	9780062941527
15	The Last Letter from Juliet	Melanie Hudson	One More Chapter	9780008319632
16	The Numbers Game	Danielle Steel	Dell	9780399179570
17	The Plague	Albert Camus	Real ePublisher	9788835382430
18	Isle of Palms	Dorothea Benton Frank	Berkley	9781440622267
19	The Giver of Stars	Jojo Moyes	Viking/Dorman	9780399562501
20	How to Walk Away	Katherine Center	St. Martin's	9781466847705



Mystery & Thriller

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN
1	The Boy from the Woods	Harlan Coben	Grand Central	9781538748169
2	Don't Let Go	Harlan Coben	Dutton	9780698411661
3	Tell Me a Secret	Samantha Hayes	Bookouture	9781786814197
4	A Conspiracy of Bones	Kathy Reichs	Scribner	9781982138905
5	The Poet	Michael Connelly	Little, Brown	9780759528277
6	Long Range	C.J. Box	Putna	9780525538240
7	My Perfect Wife	Clare Boyd	Bookouture	9781838881672
8	The Silent Patient	Alex Michaelides	Celadon	9781250301710
9	The Red Lotus	Chris Bohjalian	Doubleday	9780385544818
10	Pretty Girls	Karin Slaughter	Morrow	9780062429063



Science Fiction & Fantasy

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN
1	Smoke Bitten	Patricia Briggs	Ace	9780440001560
2	Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker	Rae Carson	Del Rey	9780593128411
3	House of Earth and Blood	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781635574050
4	Station Eleven	Emily St. John Mandel	Vintage	9780385353311
5	Clean Sweep	Ilona Andrews	NYLA	9781625173430
6	Spinward Fringe: Rebel	Randolph Lalonde	Randolph Lalonde	9781988175218
7	The Fire Heart Chronicles	Juliana Haygert	Juliana Haygert	9781393176558
8	The Color of Magic	Terry Pratchett	HarperCollins	9780061796845
9	A Court of Thorns and Roses	Sarah J. Maas	Bloomsbury	9781619634459
10	One Second After	William R. Forstchen	Forge	9781429922067





Thad McIlroy

The SUM of Metadata

To get your staff to understand metadata better, try this game

We're seeing numerous reports from across the country of bookstore closures. The hit on retail book sales is already severe. My best wishes to all of those whose well-being is impacted by the coronavirus crisis. It looks like we are going to be hunkering down for a long time.

I could write a melancholy column, but that's not going to benefit anyone. Isn't there any lightness to be found?

It's said that every crisis is an opportunity in disguise. Let's hope so. How about this upside: with so many people working from home, it's going to free up some reading time, both for adults and for youngsters (whether they're in school or not).

If you can't go to a bookstore, and with delivery services cutting back, the best way to satisfy your reading fix is e-books and audiobooks bought or borrowed online. So how do you make sure that readers are finding your company's books during this time of opportunity—and not your competitor's? It seems obvious to me: improve your metadata.

While this is clearly not a time for frivolity, I want to recommend a game that publishing staff can play from home. A metadata game. I call it SUM. That stands for Sales Uptick from (Improved) Metadata. Here's a short description: SUM pits publishing personnel against one another to see who can figure out which metadata enhancements have the largest impact on a book's online sales.

The objective is twofold. On the one hand, the game encourages players to experiment with various enhancements to their company's existing metadata, with results that can be measured. On the other hand, it challenges everyone in that company to learn more about metadata and to better understand its power to increase sales.

Here's how you play the game.

1. You only need two players, but there can just as easily be 22, and they can be from any department. One of the objectives of the game is teaching an appreciation of metadata to people who think it doesn't concern them or their department. Everyone in a publishing company should have a basic appreciation of how metadata functions. Maybe playing this game could be a good way to learn.

2. You don't need to be a metadata wizard to play. It's enough to have a handle on the basics: BISAC categories, keywords—if you know what these things are, you can play.

3. On the other hand, you're not going to win if you don't

understand the dynamics of title listings on Amazon. Most people aren't aware that Amazon supports up to twice as many metadata fields as its competitors. If you know where all of that title information comes from via your internal title management system, you're on your way. For example, do you know that reviews shouldn't be included in the main title description (there's a separate field for them)? Or that Amazon accepts both excerpts and tables of contents as distinct data? Or that you can add emphatic formatting to the main book description field (such as bold, italics, and bulleted lists)?

If you're not confident that you've got a handle on how Amazon records and displays title information, buy a copy of Ingram's *Metadata Essentials: Proven Techniques for Book Marketing and Discovery*. It's the best book available outlining the strategic side of metadata.

4. Each player chooses three or more books that they will "own" for the duration of the competition. These books should be solid backlist titles, at least a year old, and they need to have relatively steady sales month to month. They don't have to have big sales numbers—even two or three copies a month is fine. But you need to have a baseline to judge against; you want to find steady sales, so that you can reliably measure the sales change over time.

5. Each contestant is in charge of sizing up the existing metadata for each of their chosen titles and coming up with a strategy to enhance it. At the most basic level, it might be just experimenting with different BISAC categories or playing with the keywords. Advanced players will find themselves rewriting book descriptions and carefully choosing short excerpts. They might even tackle one of the toughest metadata challenges: getting additional reader reviews for a book without breaking Amazon's conflict of interest rules.

6. After 90–120 days, the sales level of each title is again measured. The contestant who has scored the highest percentage sales improvement is the winner. The goal is to goose the percentage regardless of the initial baseline.

7. The winner gets a fun prize—maybe a bottle of champagne, or perhaps a new top-of-the-line e-reader or tablet.

Voila! A distraction with a built-in reward. A work-from-home contest that's focused on increasing online sales, the #1 challenge publishers face today. ■

Thad McIlroy is an electronic publishing analyst and author based on the West Coast and at his website, The Future of Publishing. He is a founding partner of Publishing Technology Partners.



SQUAD GOALS

No longer relegated to the sidelines, sports titles by and about women take the field

BY LELA NARGI

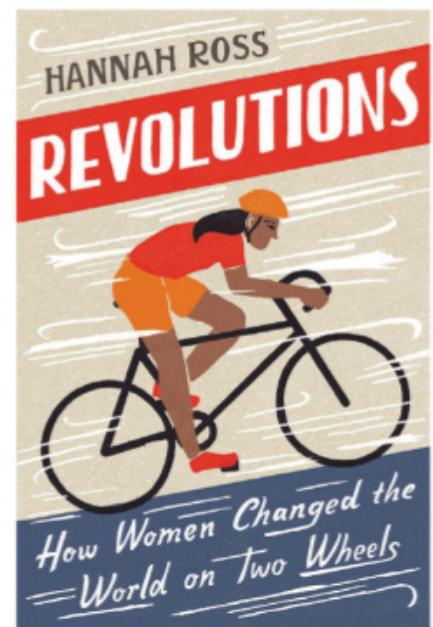
In sports publishing, stories about the men of an alphabet soup of professional leagues—the MLB, NBA, NFL, NHL, and more—proliferate. But the coming months also bring books showcasing female athletic prowess and perspective, and editors say the number and the seriousness of these titles represent a marked shift in this category.

“People are tired of the same old stories,” says Ashley Runyon, who recently left Red Lightning Books to take a position as trade director at University Press of Kentucky. “Now we’re telling stories about people who have been marginalized or overlooked.”

New books, many of them by female authors, center the experiences of women in sports. The titles are a “microcosm of the explosion of interest in women’s narratives and liberation in both fiction and nonfiction,” says Marya Pasciuto, assistant editor at Dutton and Plume. “This expansion would have been unfathomable a few years ago, and now that people have started sharing these stories, the floodgate can’t be closed.”

A new spin

Plume is publishing debut author Hannah Ross’s *Revolutions* (June), a history of women’s cycling that traces the sport’s feminist roots from the late 19th century, when the bicycle spelled new freedom for many, through the present, when women activists use cycling as a vehicle for change. Still, a century after cycling went mainstream, the sport remains “too narrow and exclusive” a boy’s club, as Ross, an amateur cyclist and publicity



Sports Books

director at London's Profile Books, writes in the prologue.

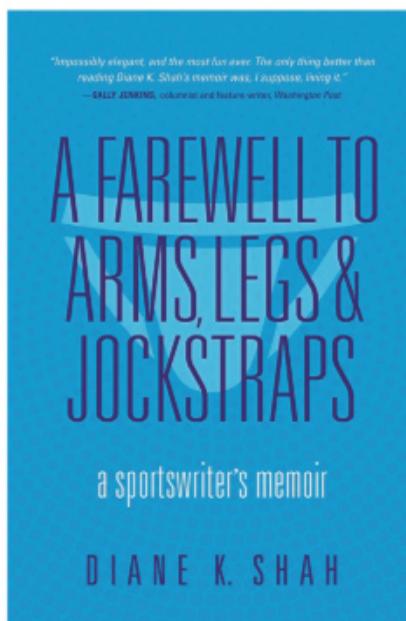
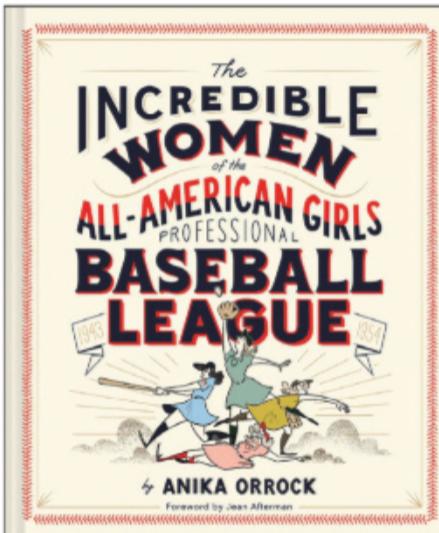
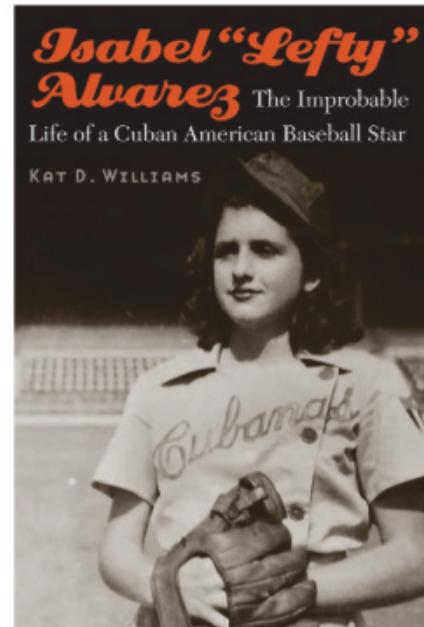
It's an issue Pasciuto has seen in sports publishing, too, though she says she feels a heartening kinship "when I read a proposal and can see in it my own frustrations" as a woman in an industry that's largely made up of other women. The forthcoming publication of *Revolutions* and other such titles, she says, "fits into a cultural moment that gives more weight and respect" to stories that have been largely ignored or outright forgotten. "Even a few years ago, books like this were considered too niche and academic, but the more stories you put in this space, the more you gather wider attention."

The short-lived All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (1943–1954) enjoyed renewed attention with the 1992 release of the movie *A League of Their Own*. As Amazon readies a TV series based on Penny Marshall's largely fictionalized version of the Rockford Peaches women's pro baseball team, publishers are releasing books that probe the league's factual history.

In May, University of Nebraska will publish *Isabel "Lefty" Alvarez* by Kat D. Williams, a history professor at Marshall University and the author of 2017's *The All-American Girls After the AAGPBL*. Williams interviewed Alvarez, a Cuban immigrant she calls a "sport-identified" woman, several times between 2007 and 2011, and the book, she writes in the preface, "looks beyond the synthesized Hollywood story of women in the AAGPBL to understand how the AAGPBL affected those who played in it."

Still, Williams acknowledges a debt to Marshall's movie and "her determination to bring these women out of the shadows," as she wrote in a 2019 opinion piece for the *Rockford Register Star*. Cartoonist Anika Orrock, too, cites the film in the introduction to the recently released *The Incredible Women of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League* (Chronicle).

Orrock presents a history of the league through her midcentury-style illustrations and the players' own words. Dolly Niemiec, who played second and third base for several teams from 1948–1952, recalls her introduction to pro ball: "I knew nothing of girls playing baseball. I thought I was the only one in the whole world," she says in the book. "One morning, my father was reading the Sunday paper and he called me from the other room. 'Dolly!' he said, 'There's tryouts this afternoon for girls' baseball!' I said, 'Girls' baseball?!"



Women in write field

Diane K. Shah began her journalism career in the late 1960s and by 1979 was *Newsweek*'s #2 sportswriter, and one of the first women to report from a men's locker room. Two years later, she became the first female sports columnist for a U.S. daily, the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*. In *A Farewell to Arms, Legs, and Jockstraps* (Red Lightning, May), which PW's starred review called an "earnest and witty memoir [that] serves as an astute look into the world of sports journalism," she outlines her experiences in a milieu where "sexism was rampant, she recalls, and overt racism par for the course."

Shah graduated from Indiana University, whose press distributes Red Lightning, and Runyon says the book hits a core objective for the imprint, presenting stories of pioneering women from what she refers to as "flyover country"—doubly overlooked, due to location and gender.

As publishers pay more attention to women's contributions to sports, the kinds of stories being put out into the world are evolving. The anthology *Losers* (Penguin Books, Aug.), edited by Mary Pilon and Louisa Thomas, takes on the uneasy subject of what it means to not win. Contributors include *Seattle Times*

features editor Stefanie Loh, formerly the paper's assistant sports editor, and Carla Correa, *New York Times* Metro Desk senior staff editor, formerly of ESPN. (For PW's q&a with Pilon and Thomas, see "Farewell to the Bromance," p. 24.)

Jessica Luther and Kavitha A. Davidson, in *Loving Sports When They Don't Love You Back* (Univ. of Texas, Sept.), explore the ethics and heartbreak of rooting for the home team amid issues of racism, sexism, transphobia, domestic violence, doping, chronic injury, and financial corruption. "It's difficult in sports to separate these issues from the athlete or the team because of the emotional

connection of fandom, which we formulate early in our lives," Davidson says. "But there are conversations to be had about these things that resonate well beyond sports." (For PW's q&a with Luther and Davidson, see "Tough Love," p. 22.)

A deep bench

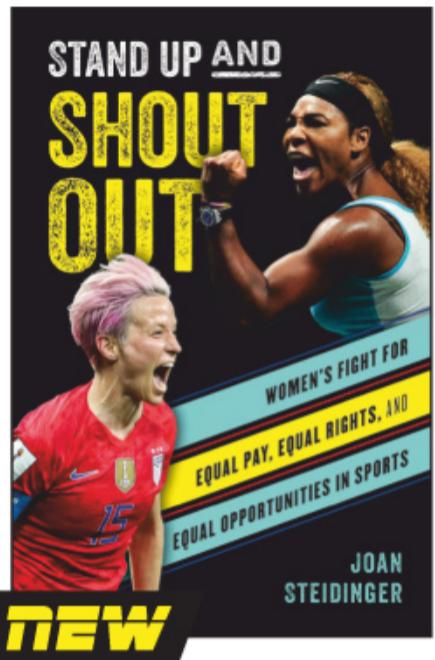
Luther is also the author of *Unsportsmanlike Conduct: College Football and the Politics of Rape*. It was among the first titles from Akashic's Edge of Sports imprint, which launched in 2016 with a mission to showcase "undertold and untold stories where sports and politics collide," says Dave Zirin, who heads the imprint. These stories have included memoirs by and biographies of women athletes,

continued on p. 23

GAME ON

FORTHCOMING SPORTS TITLES FROM

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STAND UP AND SHOUT OUT

Women's Fight for Equal Pay, Equal Rights, and Equal Opportunities in Sports

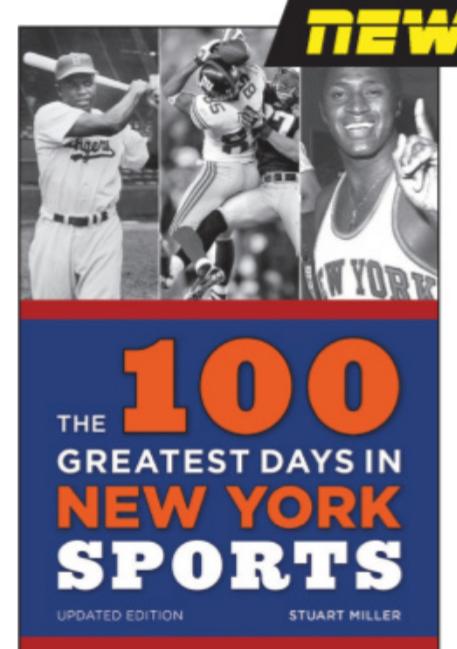
By Joan Steidinger

"This serves as a timely resource to those interested in mobilizing to fight gender and racial discrimination in sports."

—BOOKLIST

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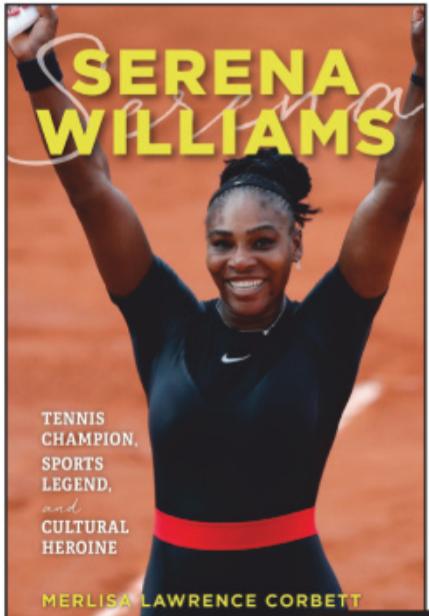
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Tough Love

PW talks with Jessica Luther and Kavitha A. Davidson

Jessica Luther cohosts the feminist sports podcast *Burn It All Down* and has written extensively about the intersection of sports and violence, including in her 2016 book, *Unsportsmanlike Conduct*.

Kavitha A. Davidson, editorial director and cohost of the daily sports news podcast the *Lead*, focuses on the place where sports meet business, culture, race, and gender. In *Loving Sports When They Don't Love You Back* (Univ. of Texas, Sept.), they merge their beats for a wide-ranging look at the moral quandaries inherent in fandom.

What got you interested in sports?

J.L.: I've always been a sports fan. My dad introduced me to football before I could talk, and I went to Florida State because I wanted to watch their football games. But I have a similar experience to many female sports fans: people don't believe it, don't believe you can talk about sports, and there's this pressure to rattle off stats and details to prove yourself over and over in ways I'm sure men don't have to. Social media, in part, has given people like us a voice.

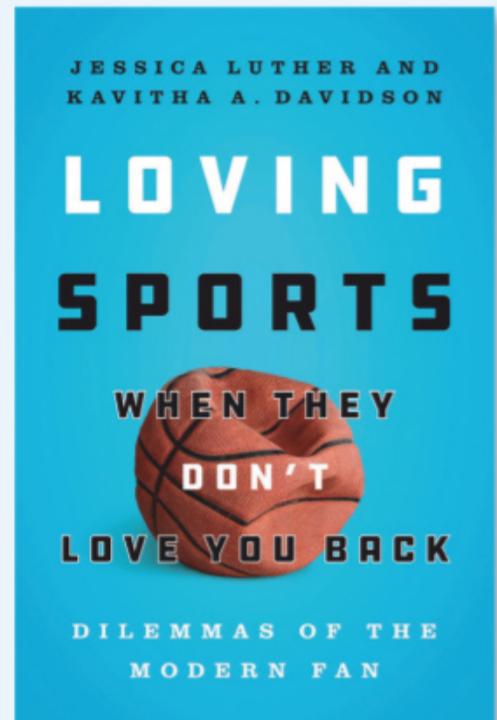
K.A.D.: My parents came to America from India in 1991, and my mother started to fall in love with the Knicks and Patrick Ewing. The first time I saw sports live was a class trip to Yankee Stadium for the home opener in 1996. I didn't know the chants or the rituals, but there was this beautiful communal experience. Sports were a way for me to connect with my classmates as a daughter of immigrants. It's been useful in adulthood, but it's also been isolating and alienating. You struggle to prove yourself as a sports fan, then prove you belong in that space as journalist.

Are attitudes toward women in sports starting to change?

J.L.: We use the chapter about the WNBA as an example of the significant changes that have happened in sports media. People who like sports like to watch and, given



© DAMON DAHLEN



the opportunity, will watch women's sports along with everything else, unless they're truly sexist. Major League Baseball is targeting girls in real investment ways and it's similar with the NFL, offering a way for girls to be fans and play; they're recognizing there's a market there. We can argue about whether they're truly inclusive but the fans are coming along and people who felt left out are finding new spaces. I'm cautiously optimistic about where we're heading.

K.A.D.: We're getting over the idea that women playing and watching sports is counterintuitive or weird or unnatural. Now the people who love and watch women's sports have found each other through social media, which has connected these communities across the country and the world—Jessica and I found each other on Twitter. We can talk about this as a trend that's growing, but these people were already out there before Twitter, and now there's a way to amplify them. One encouraging thing is that we now have feature writers and beat writers and TV personalities, and academic writers; there's a range of the kind of work women can do in this space that was not the case five years ago.

How do you think readers will react to the difficult topics in the book?

J.L.: I assume female sports fans will find common ground with us. But also, I feel like there's this "stick to sports" conversation we keep having. Our first chapter is about brain trauma in football and also in ice skating. And Kavitha wrote chapters about labor issues, and we learned that lots of sports fans are reckoning in their daily lives with stadiums being built in their communities. Sports affects them but not just as sports fans.

K.A.D.: There's so much in the book that goes beyond sports, including bringing awareness to issues around social justice and women of color and LGBTQ players. We might be accused of complaining, or "oh, you hate sports and want to change it." But I love sports so much I want it to be better.

—L.N.

continued from p. 20

such as 2018's *Tigerbelle*, coauthored by Wyomia Tyus and Elizabeth Terzakis. Tyus, a sprinter who took home Olympic gold in 1964 and 1968, relates her struggles to gain recognition as a black woman athlete before and after the Olympics.

In August, Akashic will release *Little Wonder* by journalist Sasha Abramsky (*The House of Twenty Thousand Books*), about pioneering tennis player Lottie Dod. She won her first of five Ladies' Singles Championships at Wimbledon in 1887, at age 15, and remains the youngest person to take home that trophy. Dodd went on to master several other sports—she won Olympic silver in archery in 1908—and garnered tremendous fame but was largely forgotten by WWI and died in obscurity in 1960. The International Tennis Hall of Fame, to which she was inducted in 1983, praised her "advanced game," which, it said, was anything but "lady-like."

Another tennis player who has slipped from the popular consciousness, 1930s superstar Alice Marble, is the subject of *The Divine Miss Marble* (Dutton, July) by sportswriter Robert

continued on p. 26

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"Impossibly elegant, and the most fun ever. The only thing better than reading Diane K. Shah's memoir was, I suppose, living it."

—SALLY JENKINS, columnist and feature writer, *Washington Post*

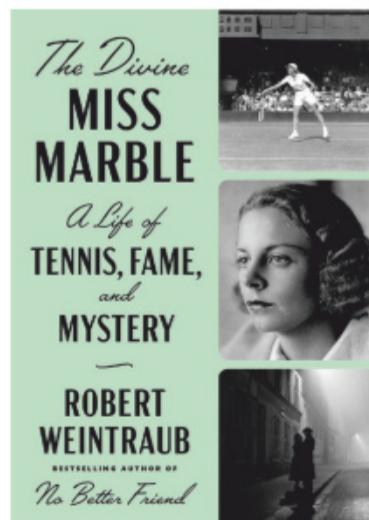
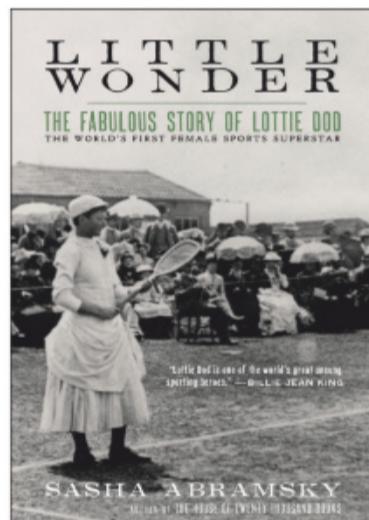
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Sports Books

Farewell to the Bromance

PW talks with Mary Pilon and Louisa Thomas

In *Losers* (Penguin Books, Aug.), journalists Mary Pilon and Louisa Thomas assemble 22 essays, most of them previously unpublished, by athletes, novelists, and sportswriters, all presenting the typically unconsidered perspective of the competitors who did not win. Pilon is the author, most recently, of 2018's *The Kevin Show: An Olympic Athlete's Battle with Mental Illness*; she writes for numerous outlets, including the *New Yorker*, *Esquire*, and *Vice*. Thomas, a former *Grantland* editor and current *New Yorker* contributing writer, is most recently the coauthor, with John Urschel, of 2019's *Mind and Matter: A Life in Math and Football*. They spoke with PW about the unexpectedly winning topic of losing.



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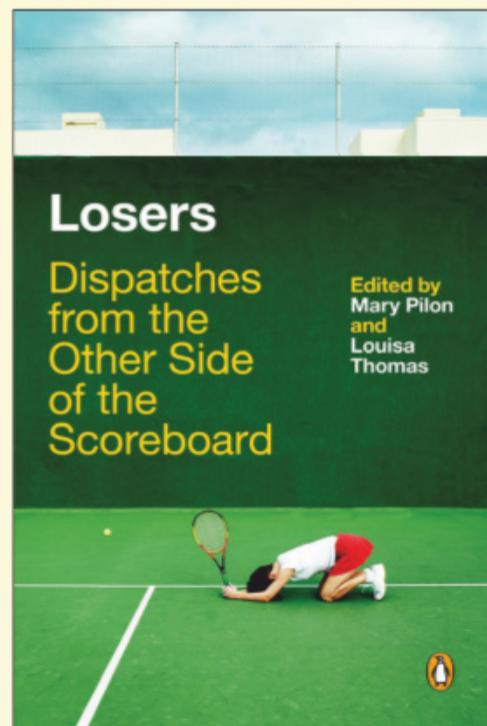


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As women sportswriters, do you have a particular point of view that allowed this collection to come into being?

L.T.: This is kind of a chicken and egg question. Being a woman in a male-dominated field has made me more sensitive to the person who's quietly been overlooked, but I'm also drawn to sports for that reason—because I see so many of those stories in it—and I don't know which came first. I find it all very moving and human, although it can be pretty ugly.

M.P.: Sports is like the religion beat. When people start talking about sports, their eyes glaze over with awe. There's this really weird bromance that can happen between sports reporters and their subjects; I covered Wall Street and no one was cheering for the banks. That's why this book came about. *Losers* was a huge area nobody was touching, a great example of stories hidden in plain sight.



GET AHEAD OF THE COUNT

with Triumph Books' Baseball Lineup

What's so compelling about the idea of losing?

M.P.: What draws me to losing as topic is that it's taboo but also a reality. Louisa and I have both been laid off from sports gigs, we've had breakups; loss is life and it's shaped me and most people I know. My instinct is to poke into what's uncomfortable. We had a list of dream contributors for *Losers* who had a range voices and experiences. [Olympic decathlete] Jeremy Taiwo wanted to write about what it was like to go from being in the Olympics one day to driving an Uber the next. I love how varied the pieces are in sports and tone.

L.T.: The thing I love about this collection is it's all over place. We both defined, and allowed the other writers to define, losers broadly. Some are not sports stories in the traditional sense. There's a funny personal essay about growing up and being bad at sports ("The Peanut Vendor and the Curse," by *Green* novelist Sam Graham-Felsen). I liked moving through all these different ways people thought about losing.

Have things changed for women who write about sports?

L.T.: I had the chance to interview [NBA columnist] Jackie MacMullan, and she has amazing horror stories of getting hair dryers thrown at her in the locker room. The sports world was one of last places where there was this benign misogyny, which is not really benign, where someone would say things like, "He throws like a girl," and where the only women visible were cheerleaders and a sideline reporter. There's been an evolution in that people are moving away from that kind of language and view.

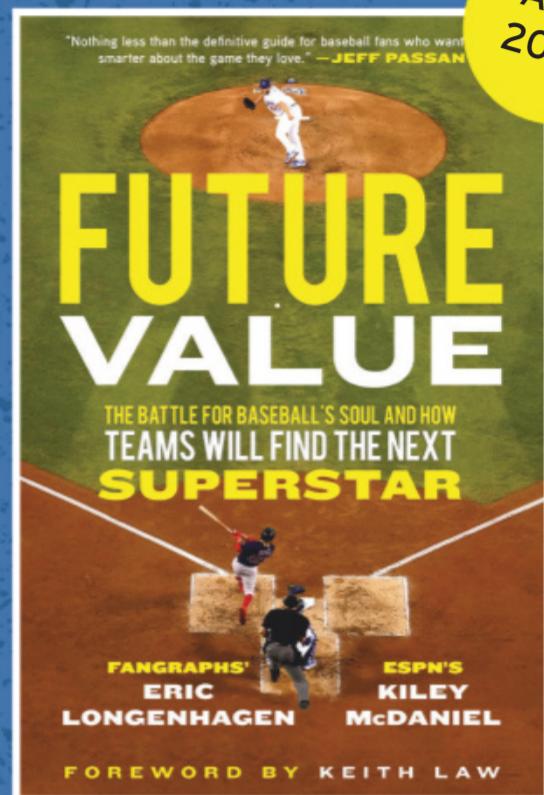
M.P.: Louisa and I started writing about sports in 2011. What's changed recently is people seem to notice us more and care a bit more. Still, a pet peeve of mine is seeing that for Father's Day, bookstores put out collections of sports books, but my mom also took me to football and baseball games. There's this idea that no women are reading about sports. It's a world where weird tropes have been allowed to exist.

Who's the readership for this collection?

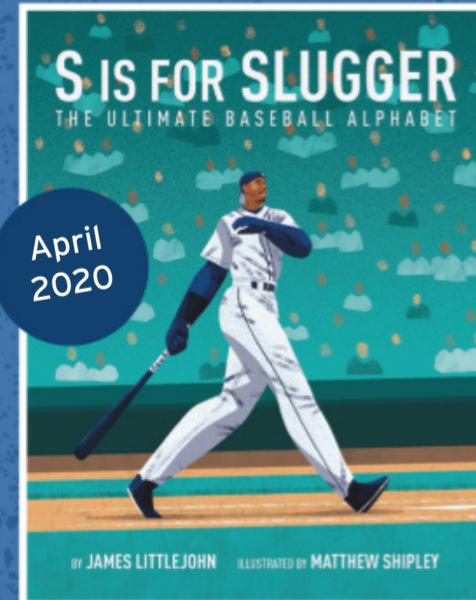
L.T.: Mothers on Mother's Day.

M.P.: I hope we speak to people who feel that they haven't been spoken to before. The last line in the introduction is, "This book is for the losers—which is to say, all of us."

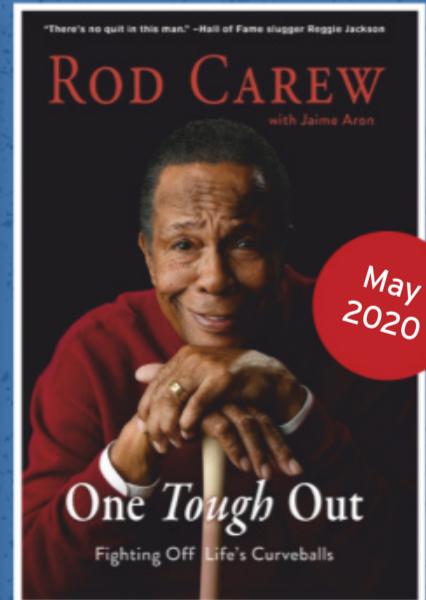
—L.N.



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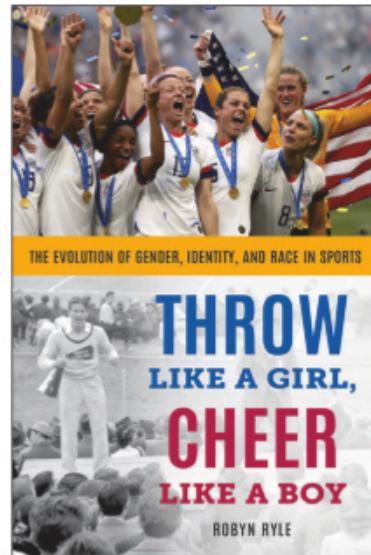
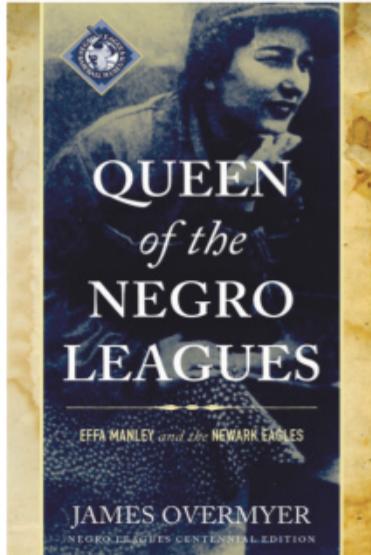
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Sports Books

continued from p. 23

Weintraub, whose previous books include *The Victory Season*. Her life outside of tennis was the subject of much speculation: Did she have a husband who was killed in action during WWII? Did she spy for U.S. Army Intelligence? But in public, Marble made an indelible mark. She demanded equal pay earlier than most other women athletes, and helped integrate tennis through her vocal support of Althea Gibson.

Civil rights activist Effa Manley was a trailblazer of a different sort. From 1936–1948, as co-owner and later owner of the Newark Eagles, she was the only female owner in baseball's Negro Leagues; in 2006, she was the first woman inducted to the Baseball Hall of Fame. 2020 marks



the 100th anniversary of the Negro Leagues, and in April Rowman & Littlefield is slated to reissue James Overmyer's biography of Manley, *Queen of the Negro Leagues*.

Originally published by Scarecrow Press in 1993, the book now includes expanded first and last chapters and a new foreword by the president of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum. It joins other Rowman titles that director of publicity Deborah Orgel Hudson says address the "clamor for stories about lesser-known pioneers and social issues," including Joanna Harper's *Sporting Gender:*

The History, Science, and Stories of Transgender and Intersex Athletes (2019) and the forthcoming *Throw Like a Girl, Cheer Like a Boy* (July), sociologist Robyn Ryle's look at the intersection of gender, sexuality, race, and social justice in sports. According to the publisher, *Queen of the Negro Leagues* "highlights the ways in which sports often contribute to inequalities, but also how they can help make the world more accepting."

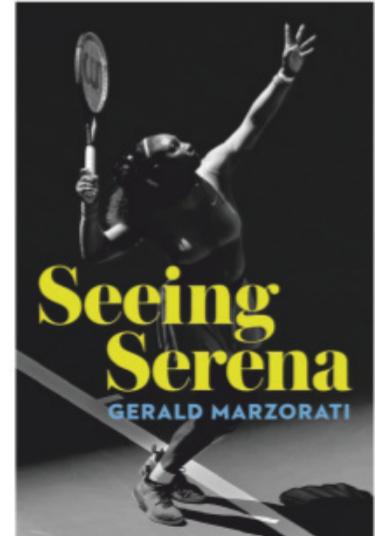
In the zone

Anyone who remains skeptical of women's interest in sports need only turn to *Our Last Season* (Penguin Press, Oct.), in which media professor and sports columnist Harvey Araton pays tribute to Michelle Musler, the New York Knicks superfan who sat not far from his courtside press seat at Madison Square Garden for 40 years. As Araton wrote in Musler's *New York Times* obituary in 2018, "Because of her seat's location and her longevity in occupying it, Ms. Musler became one of the team's most identifiable fans not associated with the entertainment industry, well known to many courtside spectators, Knicks employees and reporters who covered the team."

Araton's book is an emotional consideration of a woman he calls in its first chapter "an esteemed Garden loyalist, and part of its greatest generation," thereby solidifying her in the history of the arena and its basketball team.

It already seems that when the history of 21st-century sports is written, Serena Williams will claim pride of place. *New Yorker* tennis writer Gerald Marzorati, in the biography *Seeing Serena* (S&S, June), seeks to quantify the 23-time Grand Slam winner's "broader presence in the culture," he writes, "as a woman, as a black woman, as a striving woman from a striving family, as a powerful woman, as a sometimes angry woman, as a wealthy woman, as a fashion-conscious woman, as a woman who was a social-media 'influencer,' as a working woman with a baby." The book follows Williams's return to tennis in 2018 after giving birth to her daughter and reflects conversations the author had with coaches, other players, and journalists over the course of the 2019 tour season.

Editors agree that the breadth of sports stories being published—about contemporary legends, forgotten superstars, and the people who are passionate about them—is strengthening the category. "We have a huge outpouring of women and others who have historically been denied a platform in traditional media sharing their stories and presenting their worldview," Pasciutto says. In other words, sports publishing has come a long way, baby.



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Lela Nargi is a freelance journalist living in Brooklyn.

Sports Books

Gold Watch

The Tokyo Olympics are postponed until 2021 due to Covid-19. In the meantime, fans can read up on skateboarding, sport climbing, and surfing—three of the events slated to debut at the rescheduled games—and delve into the history of the Olympics and some of its most popular longtime sports.

Opening events

Epic Surf Breaks of the World

Lonely Planet, Aug.

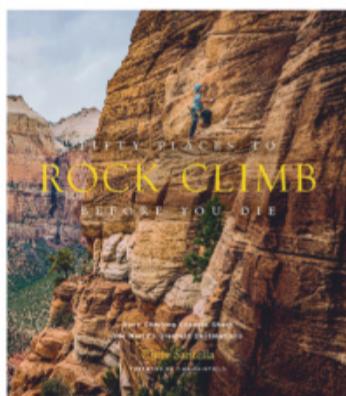
Rating surf spots by challenge level—easy, gnarly, or epic—this title includes maps and other trip-planning information, as expected from a guidebook publisher. But the focus is on the photography—action shots of surfers inside the barrel, dreamy sunset scenes—and stories from surf writers including Chas Smith (see *Reports from Hell*, below) and William Finnegan, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of the surfing memoir *Barbarian Days*.



Fifty Places to Rock Climb Before You Die

Chris Santella. Abrams Image, Apr.

In 2019, 18-year-old Brooke Raboutou became the first American to qualify for the new Olympic event of sport climbing.



Santella, whose previous *Fifty Places* books have covered surfing, skiing and snowboarding, and beer

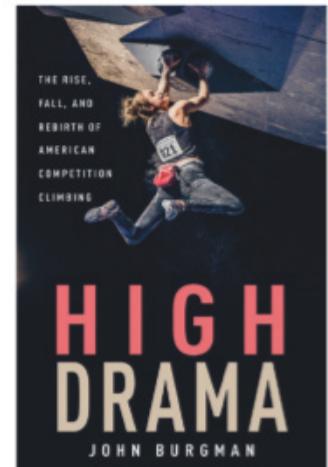
drinking, here rounds up global climbing spots such as Idaho's Elephant Perch, the Bugaboos of British Columbia, and South Africa's Rocklands. Veteran climbers offer commentary and planning advice.

High Drama

John Burgman. Triumph, out now
Burgman (*Why We Climb*), a former editor at *Outdoor Life* whose writing has appeared in *Esquire*, *Men's Health*, and elsewhere, tracks the sport of competitive

climbing from its roots as a counter-culture pastime to its current height, on the cusp of an Olympic debut.

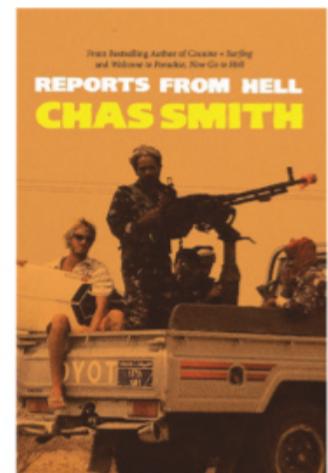
"How did the carefree recreation of climbing become a competitive sport loved by the American masses?" Burgman asks in the introduction, and explores the answers in chapters that touch on guerilla climbers, sponsorship deals, and the Sylvester Stallone movie *Cliffhanger*.



Reports from Hell

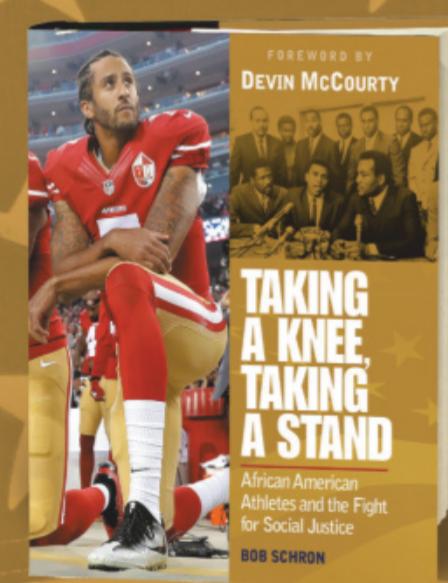
Chas Smith, Rare Bird, July

PW's review of Smith's *Welcome to Paradise, Now Go to Hell* (2013) described his prose style as what might result "if Hunter S. Thompson circa *Hell's Angels* merged with a fashion critic to write about surfing for *Maxim*." Smith's career as a gonzo surfing and war reporter began with an article for Australia's *Surfing Life*, about surfing mainland Yemen in the months after 9/11. This led to assignments covering conflict in the Middle East for Vice and others, often with surf-



"...thoughtful and comprehensive..."

—Bob Costas, Emmy-award-winning broadcaster



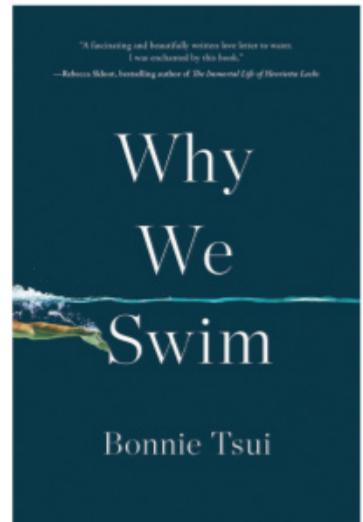
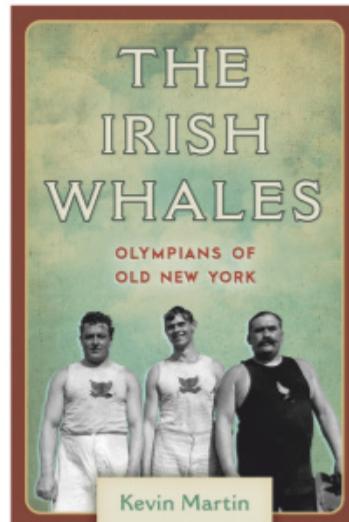
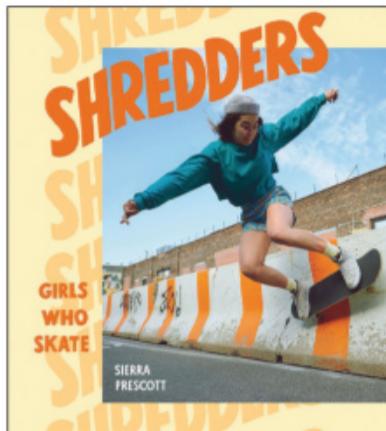
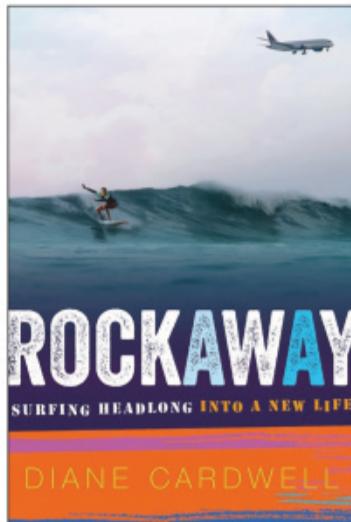
978-1-62354-537-6 HC \$24.99

"[A] fluent and knowledgeable history of . . . political activism over nearly a century."

—Samuel G. Freedman
Professor, Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and author of *Breaking the Line*

At a time when people of conscience are disrespected at the highest national level, *Taking a Knee, Taking a Stand* reaffirms the courage and achievements of African American athletes who, in the harshest of times, have used the power of their voice to effect change.

Sports Books



board in tow. In 2006, while reporting on the Israel-Lebanon War for Current TV, Smith was kidnapped by Hezbollah, an experience that's among those covered in this book.

Rockaway

Diane Cardwell. HMH, June

In this memoir, a former *New York Times* business reporter "recounts how she

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moved to Rockaway Beach, N.Y., after a divorce to pursue her passion for surfing," PW's review said, telling a "detailed story of reinvention." The narrow slip of land jutting off Queens is a popular surf spot despite, as the author writes, its "soft, mushy waves." Mushy or no, those waves provided a route to healing. "Surfing," she writes, "despite my distinct lack of aptitude and struggles to find my balance in the ocean, consistently brought me joy and a sense of purpose."

She Surf

Edited by Lauren L. Hill. Gestalten, June. Riding the wave of interest not only in surfing but in female athletes in general, this book documents women claiming what the publisher calls "their rightful place in the world of this sport." Hill travels to Hawaii, Morocco, and beyond for a joyful look, told via photographs and interviews, of women who, she writes in the introduction, are "making up for lost decades in getting back to surfing's legacy of inclusivity."

Shredders

Sierra Prescott. Ten Speed, Aug. When skateboarding comes to the Olympics for the first time, eight women are slated to compete for the U.S.; several of them receive mention, as "all-stars," in this overview of women's contribution to what author and photographer Prescott writes is "not just a sport. It's a feeling. It's a lifestyle. It's a frame of mind, an addiction, a bond." Those new to the sport can bone up

on skater slang with a section introducing terms like *brain bucket* (a helmet) and *swellbow* (a self-explanatory injury).

Fan favorites

The Irish Whales

Kevin Martin. Rowman & Littlefield, Aug. Eight-time gold medalist Usain Bolt is a modern track and field superstar. A century ago, from the 1900 to 1924 Olympics, the U.S. Track and Field team's weight throwers dominated their events, winning 18 gold medals. Martin, whose *Have Ye No Homes to Go To?* pays tribute to the Irish pub from Norman times onward, here follows the exploits of those men, who were born in Ireland, emigrated New York City, and became heroes of their community.

Why We Swim

Bonnie Tsui. Algonquin, Apr.

American Chinatown author Tsui takes an "eclectic, well-crafted survey," PW's review said, of humanity's relationship to swimming, one of the most popular Olympic sports. Included in the mix are stories of U.S. Olympic athletes, including Gertrude Ederle, who won gold in 1926 and two years later became the first woman to swim across the English Channel; 12-time medalist Dara Torres, who competed for the first time in 1984 and most recently in 2008, at age 41; and current multi-record-holder Katie Ledecky, who started her Olympic career in 2012 at age 15.

—L.N.



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HOMELAND

In her new book of essays, novelist Laila Lalami asks what it truly means to be an American

By HOPE REESE

The day after Donald Trump was elected in November 2016, Laila Lalami's daughter asked her a question: "He doesn't have to make us leave, right?"

Lalami, a Moroccan American who lives in Los Angeles, has been a citizen for decades; she assured her daughter that it would not happen. In reality, she wasn't sure.

"Every time I have thought about this conversation—and I have thought about it dozens of times, in my sleepless nights since the election—I have felt less certain," she writes in her new essay collection, *Conditional Citizens: On Belonging in America* (Doubleday, Apr.).

Lalami has published four novels, and this is her first nonfiction book. The original essays draw on the themes of identity and politics that she has written about for outlets such as the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Nation*, and the *New York Times*.

In the book, Lalami tackles what it means to be an immigrant in America—one whose paperwork states that she is a citizen but whose daily life sometimes makes her feel as though she doesn't belong. With essays like "Assimilation," "Borders," and "Inheritance," the book takes a deep dive into the notion that, despite the ideals of America's founders and Thomas Jefferson's promise that "all men are created equal," all American citizens are not treated equally.

Born in 1968 in Rabat, Morocco, Lalami grew up speaking Moroccan Arabic



© JESSE DITTMAR

and later learned standard Arabic and French. She moved to the U.S. 25 years ago to complete a doctoral degree in linguistics, received her citizenship in 2000, and is currently a professor of creative writing at the University of California at Riverside. Talking via Skype from her home in Los Angeles, her tight dark curls resting on her shoulders, she is animated, gesturing with her hands, surrounded by books in her office.

Lalami notes she has always felt, to a degree, that she's living in a gray area, culturally. "This gray life of mine is not unique.... Most of the time, gray lives go unnoticed," she writes. It's only when some kind of political event or violent act erupts that "gray lives become targets." She adds that her time in the U.S. has been wonderful in many ways, but she's "never been entirely secure or comfortable" here.

Lalami says she feels that way because she has experienced being treated as what she calls a "conditional citizen." The term comes up throughout the essays, taking shape in ways big and small: she writes about those who are "policed and punished" more than others, as well as those who "are more likely to be expatriated and denaturalized."

Being considered a citizen, Lalami says, is something most people take for granted. "The idea of citizenship is below the surface—it's not something that you ever think about in your everyday life," she explains. "You have breakfast with your family, you go to work, you do your thing, you come home, you rest and watch TV or read a book or whatever. It is something you become conscious of under specific circumstances."

For Lalami, the idea of conditional citizenship began crystallizing in recent years, after interactions she's had with various government officials. "You become conscious of it when you're crossing the border, because then you're sorted by nationality—this line for E.U. nationals, this line for U.S. nationals," she says. A border agent at the Los Angeles International Airport once asked her husband, who traveled with her, "How many camels did you have to trade in for her?"

"That's when the idea of conditionality emerges—this feeling that you're not really American if you don't support what the government is doing," Lalami explains. "If you don't support the troops, if you don't agree with how things are being done. Everything that distinguishes you from others becomes suspicious."

Being an Arab American after 9/11 has also impacted Lalami's understanding of her place in this country. "Bush's message of

with-us-or-against-us carried the implication that one could not be Arab and American, or Muslim and American, unless one was on the side of the United States in its military fights," she writes in "Allegiance."

In "Faith," Lalami highlights her discomfort with being regularly burdened with "having to educate white Americans" about topics that they assume she's an expert on because of the color of her skin, or her religion. As we talk about the essay, she offers an example: when she was employed at the Getty Research Institute in the late '90s, a colleague who worked on her floor asked her out to lunch. The reason? He said he had questions about the Middle East.

Lalami laughs. "I'm not from the Middle East!" she says. "I'm from North Africa! And even if I was from the Middle East region, what is the question? Is it about politics? Culture? Can you imagine someone approaching you saying they want to have lunch because they have questions about Texas?"

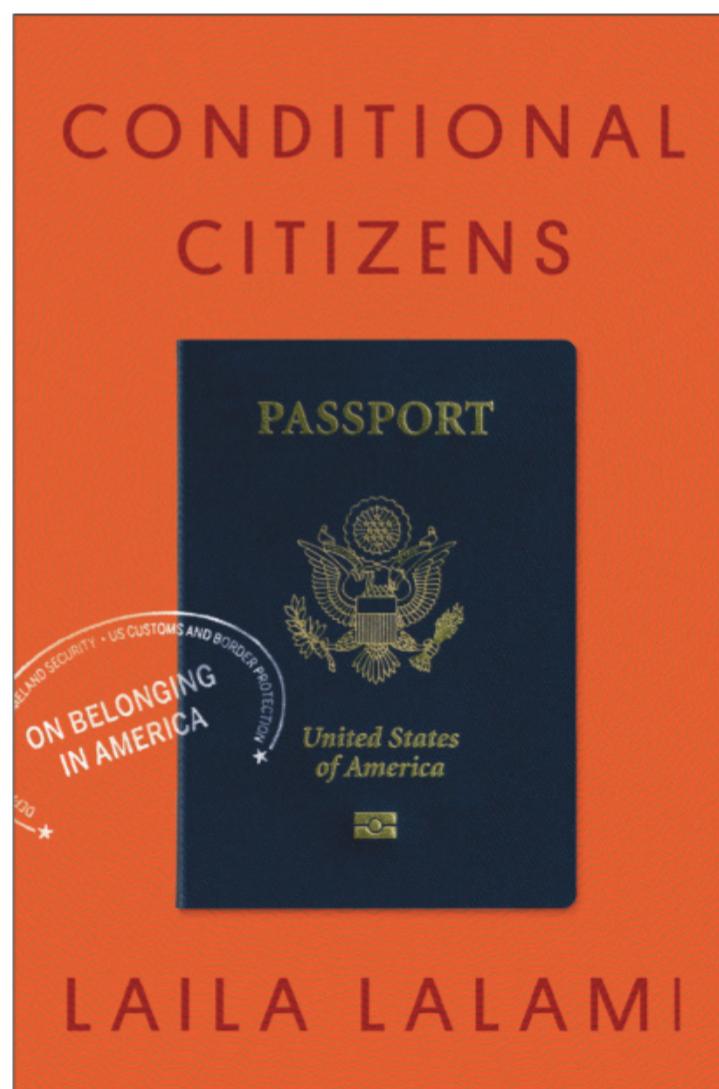
Citizenship, in Lalami's view, brings with it a responsibility to learn about one's country and its relationship to others. When people refuse to do this work, she says, they shirk their "responsibilities as citizens." Being a good citizen is "more of an active thing than just a state of being: it's a relationship—and like every relationship, it involves effort and it involves nurturing and it involves work."

Still, Lalami acknowledges the importance of making an effort to learn. "People who ask are at least curious and trying to learn," she

says. "And especially as an educator, that is something that I have a deep love for. I really do think that people can change their minds. I don't think that they can change their minds based on reading about politics in the newspaper or listening to a politician or any of that. I think that they change their minds—sometimes without realizing it—when they hear another person's story."

In the end, Lalami wrote *Conditional Citizens* for her daughter. "The most important role I have is with my family—my husband and my child," she says. "When you think about the grand scheme of things, all of this is going to go away. The only thing that's going to last is the love that you have for one another." ■

Hope Reese is a journalist, currently living in Budapest, who contributes to JSTOR Daily, Longreads, Undark, Vice, Vox, and other publications.



Reviews

Fiction

Rodham

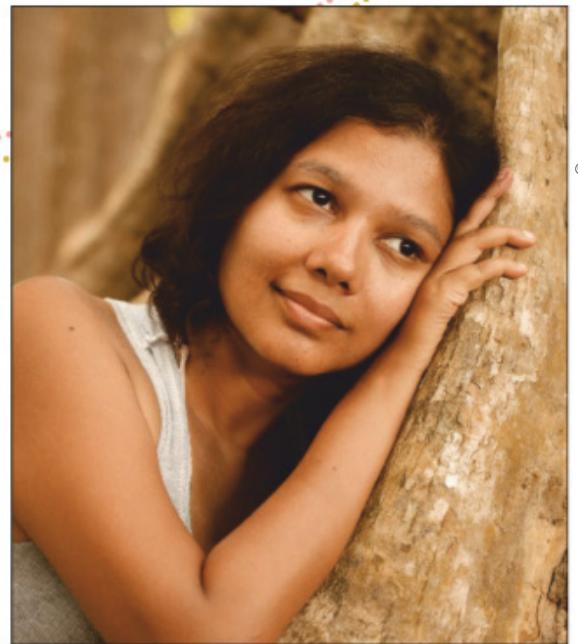
Curtis Sittenfeld. Random House, \$30 (432p)
ISBN 978-0-399-59091-7

In this entertaining political fantasy, Sittenfeld (*Eligible*) imagines Hillary Clinton's personal and professional life if she and Bill had gone their separate ways instead of marrying. The novel begins with an intimate perspective on historical events: at Wellesley's 1969 graduation, Hillary feels the exhilaration of speaking her mind in public. Two years later, she meets Bill at Yale Law School. He is handsome, larger than life, proud of his Arkansas roots. She is ambitious, smart, hardworking, and opinionated. They fall in love and discuss marriage, but break up because of Bill's philandering. Bill runs for president in 1992 but drops out of the race. Hillary, meanwhile, is a year into her first term as senator from Illinois. When she runs for president, in 2016, Bill is one of three primary challengers. Scenes with cameos from Donald Trump prove livelier than familiar elements like Hillary's chocolate chip cookies, which she brings to a Yale potluck. Still, Sittenfeld movingly captures Hillary's awareness of her transformation into a complicated public figure ("The feeling was in the collapse, the simultaneity, of how I seemed to others and who I really was"). Readers won't have to be feminists (though it would help) to relish Sittenfeld's often funny, mostly sympathetic, and always sharp what-if. (May)

Latitudes of Longing

Shubhangi Swarup. One World, \$27 (320p)
ISBN 978-0-593-13255-5

Swarup debuts with an inventive novel in stories that features a multigenerational cast in search of love and worldly purpose. In the opening story, "Islands," it's 1948 and Girija Varma, India's first head of the National Forestry Service, lives on the Andaman Islands with his clairvoyant wife, Chanda Devi, who speaks with the local ghosts as she and Girija start a family and take in a young woman, Mary, to act as



© NIKHIL HEMRAJANI

Shubhangi Swarup's inventive, magical debut novel, Latitudes of Longing, features yetis and talking glaciers (reviewed on this page).

nanny. "Faultline" sees Mary's return to the mainland years later after learning that her long-abandoned son, Plato, has been imprisoned. Plato's drug-smuggling friend Thapa leads the third story, "Valley," and takes to a young woman, Bebo, who works at a dance club in early '90s Burma. Swarup concludes with "Snow Desert," in which a village elder falls in love with an outsider and assists a scientist in understanding the nature of earthquakes. By integrating magical elements—talking glaciers and yetis appear—Swarup eschews conventional love stories to focus instead on many forms of desire, while the zigzagging across time and place. This offers beautiful depictions of humanity through a successfully experimental form. (May)

★ A Country for Dying

Abdellah Taïa, trans. from the French by Emma Ramadan. Seven Stories, \$16.95 trade paper (144p) ISBN 978-1-60980-990-4

Immigrants in Paris seek political, economic, and sexual refuge in Taïa's heart-wrenching tale of postcolonial identity crisis (after *Infidels*). Zahira, a 45-year-old prostitute, is haunted by memories of her father's suicide in Morocco when she was a child, and of Allal, a possessive Moroccan who loved her decades earlier. In Paris, Zahira looks out for an Algerian protégé, Zannouba, on the eve of Zannouba's sex reassignment surgery, and Mojtaba, a gay Iranian dissident, whose innocence awakens Zahira's maternal instincts. For Zahira and others, solace eludes them in the

form of lost or unrequited love, a theme Taïa distills in a nested story of Zahira's vanished aunt, Zineb. Enlisted by the French to service soldiers in 1950s Indochina, Zineb is left adrift between the family she's left behind and a love she can only sell. Taïa's blunt style is shot through with an immediacy accenting the high stakes for those chased across borders and running from their own pasts ("You thought you had fled our world," says Allal). But Zahira is not free, and Allal has not forgotten her; he is coming now to Paris, planning to kill her. In the churning gears of this compact, deeply moving novel, crises of identity prove more solvable than those of the heart. (May)

Telephone

Percival Everett. Graywolf, \$16 trade paper (232p) ISBN 978-1-64445-022-2

Everett's affecting if uneven latest (after the novel *So Much Blue*) is narrated by Zach Wells, a tenured "geologist-slash-paleobiologist" professor at a university in Los Angeles. Wells's life is cushy yet dissatisfying—his marriage has stagnated, as has his passion for teaching. His sole source of joy comes from his 12-year-old daughter, Sarah, a precocious kid with a talent for chess. But soon Wells faces problems larger than his ennui: he is unsettled by a student's infatuation, and a friendship with an "extremely young" assistant professor verges on romantic with an unexpected kiss. Back home, Sarah shows symptoms of epilepsy that are later diagnosed as symptoms of a rare terminal illness. While these plotlines alone would suffice for a novel, Everett throws in another, stranger twist. Wells discovers a slip of paper reading "Ayuadame" ("help me" in Spanish) in the pocket of a jacket he'd ordered on eBay from a New Mexico merchant. Having decided to investigate, he uncovers a workshop staffed by kidnapped Mexican women and sets out to save them. The juggling act Everett must maintain to keep the book coherent leads to some unsatisfying and rushed conclusions, yet his greatest success is not in the story but in the portrait of a man pushed by grief toward irrationality. Despite its bumps, this is a spellbinding, heartbreaking tale. (May)

The Thirty Names of Night

Zeyn Joukhadar. Atria, \$27 (304p) ISBN 978-1-982121-49-5

Joukhadar's evocative follow-up to *The Map of Salt and Stars* explores a 20-something Syrian-American trans man's journey of self-discovery. The unnamed protagonist—he later goes by the name he gives himself, Nadir—is an aspiring artist in Brooklyn who likes to go out dancing with friends and enjoys listening to his friend Sami play the oud. Nadir lives with his grandmother, Teta, and is haunted by the death of his mother years ago in a fire. After Nadir finds a diary belonging to a Syrian artist named Laila, in an old tenement inhabited by Syrian-Americans, he becomes obsessed with finding the print of a rare bird by Laila. As the story unfolds, Nadir's narration and direct addresses to his mother ("Your presence is still here, everywhere, your hand on everything") expands to include Laila's voice ("The day I began to bleed was the day I met the woman who built the flying machine") as Nadir blossoms into his trans identity. Scenes with Sami, with whom Nadir falls in love, are particularly affecting. Quietly lyrical and richly imaginative, Joukhadar's tale shows how Laila and Nadir live and love and work past the shame in their lives through their art. This is a stirring portrait of an artist as a young man. (May)

I Don't Expect Anyone to Believe Me

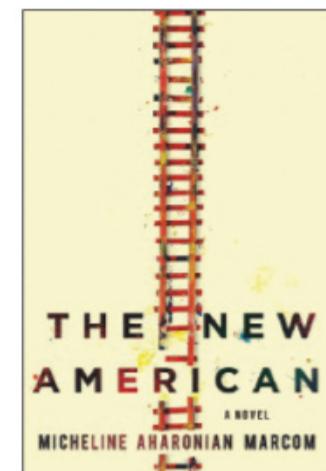
Juan Pablo Villalobos, trans from the Spanish by Daniel Hahn. And Other Stories, \$17.95 trade paper (356p) ISBN 978-1-911508-48-9

Villalobos (*I'll Sell You a Dog*) mixes academia and organized crime in this fast-paced, irreverent tale. The narrator, named Juan Pablo Villalobos, is a Mexican graduate student in literature about to fly to Barcelona on a scholarship to work on his dissertation about humor in Latin American literature. After a gangster

★ The New American

Micheline Aharonian Marcom. Simon & Schuster, \$26 (272p) ISBN 978-1-9821-2072-6

In Marcom's powerful, heartbreaking latest (after *The Brick House*), an undocumented college student makes the long odyssey back to California from Guatemala after being deported. Emilio Matias, 21, is a UC Berkeley student in 2012 when he gets in a car accident. After he is unable to produce a valid ID, the police turn him over to ICE, who jail him for months before sending him to his aunt's house in Todos Santos, Guatemala. Desperate to return to his home, his studies, his family, and his girlfriend in California, Emilio embarks on a violent and treacherous trip hopping freight trains with four other migrants. Along the way, members of their group become victims of thieves, rapists, and sadistic police, and must contend with unreliable smugglers. There are also safe houses and villagers who provide food, water, clothing, and medical care, and generous fellow migrants. Marcom's prose is steady and soulful, particularly during the graphic, harrowing account of an excruciating Sonora Desert crossing, and the narrative is deepened by a series of lyrical interludes describing dangerous journeys of unnamed refugees ("they and all of our stories are dark phenomena of this dark earth," one reflects). Marcom's remarkable tale credibly captures the desperation and despair of those who undertake the dangerous trek north. (May)



kidnaps him at a bookstore and takes him to a basement, Juan Pablo is tied to a chair next to his cousin, a petty criminal named Projects. The kidnappers tell Juan Pablo he must go to Barcelona and seduce the daughter of a dirty politician, or else they will kill his father. Juan Pablo reluctantly accepts, but there are many unforeseen troubles once he lands in Barcelona. Villalobos switches between the registers of the criminal underworld and the ivory tower with ease—on one page, mobsters spit insults at each other; on the next, the narrator discusses an essay by Gayle Rubin and Judith Butler about sexuality and technology. Villalobos's strange narrative is intellectually nimble, wildly entertaining, and undeniably filthy, with many scenes of debauchery juxtaposed against thoughtful

diary entries from Juan Pablo's girlfriend and meditations on the work of writers, all ably translated by Hahn. This thriller has substance and a comedic heart, and is well worth diving into. (May)

Dark Satellites

Clemens Meyer, trans. from the German by Katy Derbyshire. Fitzcarraldo, \$17.95 trade paper (224p) ISBN 978-1-913097-13-4

These 12 quiet and powerful stories from Meyer (*Bricks and Mortar*) focus on intimacies between people on the margins, and on the social barriers that isolate people from one another. In "Late Arrival," a railway employee and a hairdresser become close while spending long nights in the station bar after work. Over time, the women's relationship becomes more

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serious, and they bend the rules of their jobs in order to send each other messages and spend more time together. In "The Crack," a man's apartment is broken into, but instead of reporting the crime, he wanders the streets and encounters an old woman who mistakes him for her grandson. In the deeply moving title story, a man who owns a burger bar grows close to an Arabic Muslim man in his apartment block and even closer to the man's wife. In each tale, Meyer's disorienting style highlights an uncanny element in the characters' otherwise mundane moments, often to powerful effect. Scenes and conversations transition less than they cascade into one another—while geographies and time morph and dissolve from one line to the next. Meyer's strong, mysterious stories merit revisiting. (May)

Don't Shed Your Tears for Anyone Who Lives on These Streets

Patricio Pron, trans. from the Spanish by Mara Faye Lethem. Knopf, \$26.95 (304p) ISBN 978-0-451-49317-0

Pron (after *My Fathers' Ghost Is Climbing in the Rain*) delivers a dry study of political extremism and its intersection with literature. Pietro Linden is an Italian political

activist involved with the assassination of his former fascist college professor in 1977. Though he is ordered to lie low by his government liaison, Linden, who had been secretly monitoring the professor's movements, picks up some books the professor had ordered and begins reading them, then reaching out to the authors of the books: futurist-fascist literati who were at their publishing peak in the 1940s. Linden conducts a series of exhaustive interviews with four of the authors regarding their political activism and connection to the death of author Luca Borrello at the 1945 Fascist Writers' Conference. During these interviews, Linden discovers Borrello's antifascist allegiances, and reckons with the hypocrisy of 1940s futurist-fascist literary movements and the amoral and blind passion that often accompanies extremism. As Linden begins to question his own political leanings, Pron weaves a surprising and complicated web involving Linden's antifascist, resistance fighter father who was held prisoner during a government purge in 1944, and Linden's son, the aimless protestor Tomasso, who lives in poverty and hopelessness in 2014. Disappointingly, Pron's intriguing frame is rendered lifeless with too many secondary

characters. This is a dense, frustratingly erudite take on art, politics, and "writing literature into life." (May)

The Paris Hours

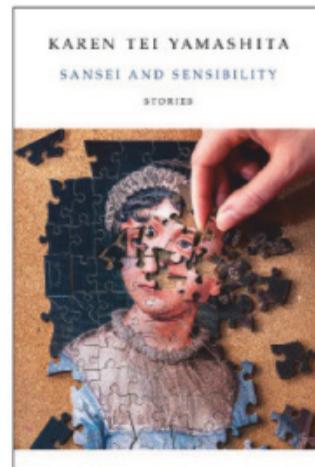
Alex George. Flatiron, \$26.99 (272p)
ISBN 978-1-250-30718-7

Set in Paris over 24 hours in summer 1927, George's engrossing third novel (after *Setting Free the Kites*) interweaves the lives of four characters struggling with loss, loneliness, and secrets. A decade after Turkish forces drove Souren Balakian from his home in Anatolia, he attempts to exorcize terrifying memories through his puppet shows. Before fleeing Paris to avoid reprisal for unpaid debts, Guillaume Blanc decides to meet the daughter he believes was born from his tryst with a trapeze artist 10 years earlier. Camille Clermont has saved one of the notebooks her late employer, Marcel Proust, asked her to burn; when her husband sells it without her permission, she fears that a shameful secret she confided to Proust will become public. Journalist Jean-Paul Maillard interviews luminaries such as Josephine Baker, but his heart is in the unpublished book he wrote about his infant daughter, Elodie, who disappeared in 1918 amid the German shelling that killed his wife. By evoking fictional characters and historical figures with equal vividness and wisely using repeated motifs (a Ravel piece, a prostitute, a club, a painting), George unites his narratives in a surprising yet wholly convincing denouement. Elegant and evocative, this will have special appeal for lovers of Paris and fans of Paula McLain's *The Paris Wife*. (May)

★ Sansei and Sensibility

Karen Tei Yamashita. Coffee House, \$16.95 trade paper (232p) ISBN 978-1-56-689-578-1

Yamashita (*I Hotel*) returns with a career-spanning collection of stories originally published between 1975–2019, each of which is in dialogue with the work of Jane Austen. The stories are mostly set in California's third-generation Japanese Sansei community. "Bombay Gin" is the comic, emotionally charged narrative of a woman locked in her dead aunt's house who takes inventory of the kitchen, then cooks her aunt's recipes with expired food. "The Bath" is a moving look at twin girls' bathing rituals with their family. About half of the stories are micro Jane Austen pastiches—the *Emma* homage "Emi," and "Giri & Gaman," which references *Pride and Prejudice*, are standouts. "Omaki-San" is the high point, an epistolary sequence inspired by Lady Susan, with letters between family members and friends who live in Japan and the U.S., revealing the thrilling postwar story of a young Japanese woman and her American soldier husband. The collection is rounded off by an amusing inventory of Sansei recipes (instructions for KT's Crab Miso Bake with Egg: "Offer to guests to test their Asian quotient") and a timeline of Japanese-American life in America. The range of characters, sparkling humor, connective themes, and creative ambition all showcase Yamashita's impressive powers. (May)



Old Lovegood Girls

Gail Godwin. Bloomsbury, \$27 (352p)
ISBN 978-1-632-86822-0

Godwin's disappointing latest (after *Grief Cottage*) examines the trajectory of a friendship between two college roommates from 1958 to late 1999. Feron Hood, secretive and self-contained, is a survivor of a tragic and abusive past and finds comfort in her relationship at the Southern Lovegood College with Merry Grace Jellicoe, a confident tobacco heiress with an open-hearted innocence. Using alternating viewpoints, correspondence between the two, and occasional scenes of reunion, Godwin tracks the push-pull dynamic of

their friendship. In 1968, Feron, an aspiring writer living in New York City, grows jealous of Merry for publishing a short story in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Merry's success fuels Feron's creative impulse, while Merry is intrigued by her friend's experiences in New York. Though Feron purloins Merry's personal history for her own writing, Merry's loyalty to Feron never wavers. Beyond the envy, Feron develops into a genuinely devoted friend, and eventually helps Merry with her family's tobacco business. Repetition of language and dialogue from one scene to the next and dull descriptions of the writing process unfortunately blunt this otherwise moving reflection on long-term friendship. Godwin is not at her best here. (May)

The First Actress: A Novel of Sarah Bernhardt

C.W. Gortner. Random House, \$28 (432p)
ISBN 978-1-5247-9907-6

Gortner (*The Romanov Empress*) captures the drama and pathos of legendary actor Sarah Bernhardt's life in this enchanting work. The illegitimate child of a Jewish courtesan, Bernhardt is raised in Brittany until her wet nurse can no longer house her. In 1852, Sarah's mother, Julie, sends her unloved, eight-year-old daughter to boarding school in Versailles. After Sarah's theatrical gifts shine in a school play, one of her mother's longtime patrons helps arrange acting training for her as well as a contract with the august Comédie-Française. The school's rigid adherence to tradition clashes with Sarah's questioning approach, and she leaves the Comédie in the first of many stormy changes from one theatrical company to the next. Becoming pregnant by Comte Émile de Kératry, an aristocratic paying lover, she decides to keep the baby—her only child, Maurice—despite the social taboo and the comte's rejection. After Bernhardt does heroic work as a volunteer nurse and infirmary manager during the Franco-Prussian War, she becomes one of the most acclaimed actors of her age through a mix of talent, hard work, and savvy self-promotion. Skillful first-person narration evokes Bernhardt's fierce energy and tempestuous liaisons, the vulnerability borne of her wounding childhood, and her struggles against misogyny and anti-Semitism. Gortner does justice to this trailblazing

celebrity and her fascinating era. (May)

The Poison Flood

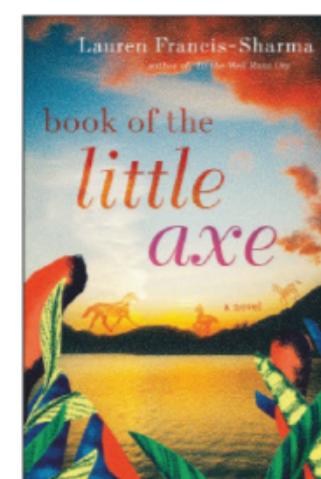
Jordan Farmer. Putnam, \$26 (288p) ISBN 978-0-593-08507-3

This affecting novel from Farmer (*The Pallbearer*) combines an unconventional lead with a sobering portrayal of an environmental disaster's impact on a small community. Though Hollis Bragg is a gifted songwriter, paid for writing lyrics for a popular singing group without attribution, his self-esteem is diminished by the hunchback he's had most of his life, which has made him an object of derision. Environmental protests in his hometown of Coopersville, W.Va., which has been economically depressed since the closing of the local coal mines a few years earlier, prompt him to launch a new creative project, a concept album featuring songs "performed by a sick minstrel... who travels a wasteland version of America." He puts that endeavor on hold after a leak from a chemical tank pollutes the area's water, driving the residents to extreme measures to survive. Bragg gets involved in a murder related to the crisis, but the crime subplot is secondary to the lead's struggles to come to terms with his past and himself. Farmer is especially good at making the despair of Coopersville palpable. Readers who like their fiction to have a social conscience will want to take a look. Agent: Noah Ballard, Curtis Brown. (May)

Book of the Little Axe

Lauren Francis-Sharma. Atlantic Monthly, \$26 (400p) ISBN 978-0-8021-2936-9

Francis-Sharma (*'Til the Well Runs Dry*) delivers a satisfying and perceptive transnational family saga. In 1830 Montana, Victor Rose struggles to complete an Apsaalooke vision quest, while his best friend, Like-Wind, passes through their tribe's initiation rite. Victor and his mother, Rosa Rendon, flee after Victor witnesses the drowning death of a young woman who'd spurned him for Like-Wind, to avoid potential suspicion. While traveling, Victor discovers the journal of Creadon Rampley, a hardworking young wanderer from the States seeking gold in Trinidad, in Rosa's belongings. Here, the narrative flashes back to Rosa's childhood in Trinidad as the daughter of a prosperous free black farmer and blacksmith. When the British



seize control of the colony and attempt to edge out all non-European land-owners, Rosa's father takes desperate measures to keep the land, eventually settling on marrying Rosa's

sister Eve to Creadon. Back on the trail, Victor and Rosa run into trouble on their way to Kullyspell territory. Like-Wind, having reluctantly led two Frenchmen to Victor and Rosa, is killed by one of the Frenchmen during a fight with them as Victor defends Rosa from their sexual assault. Creadon's writings and Rosa's memories disclose a cascade of family secrets that explains how Rose and Creadon ended up in North America. In this masterly epic, the pleasure lies in piecing everything together. Agent: Victoria Sanders, Victoria Sanders & Assoc. (May)

The Royal Abduls

Ramiza Shamoun Koya. Forest Avenue, \$16.95 trade paper (320p) ISBN 978-1-942436-41-6

Koya's accomplished debut examines Indian-American identity and bigotry against a Muslim family after 9/11. In 2005, newly arrived in Washington, D.C., to start postdoc research on wild silk moths, Amina Abdul tries to help her brother Mohammed deal with his imploding marriage. Meanwhile, her 11-year-old nephew, Omar, elicits scrutiny after bringing Amina's decorative Indian knife to show his classmates ("In these times, a Muslim child brings a knife to school—we can't just not report it," the principal says to Amina, explaining why she called the police). After Omar watches al-Qaeda videos online, the family's ISP reports his activity to the police, who arrest Mohammed and briefly detain him. Meanwhile, Amina faces sexism in the workplace as her lab work is overlooked. Further complicating things is Amina's romance with a coworker's brother, whom she is unwilling to tell about a job offer in India. As Amina considers the move, she continues to worry about Mohammed and Omar, who both self-destruct in their own ways as they struggle to find their place

and navigate their identity. Koya writes sharply about what it means to be South Asian in the U.S. after 9/11, and skillfully weaves the family members' conflicts and predicaments. This is a mature, fully realized effort. (May)

Ghostlove

Dennis Mahoney. Ig, \$16.95 trade paper (234p) ISBN 978-1-63246-105-6

In Mahoney's playful ghost story (after *Bell Weather*), a man meets a dead woman who haunts his upstate New York house. William Rook, 25, has a keen interest in the occult, having grown up haunted by his dead mother ("Years of study and experience had taught me there was more than one kind of ghost"). After William's father dies in a car accident, William buys and moves into a house with a friendly ghost

named June. In order to help release June from limbo, William must use an array of spells and rituals to summon *The Book of Elements*, a rare text that allows its readers to pick their afterlife. A three-winged pigeon and a man named Mr. Gormly, who lives in the basement and prefers to remain unseen, provide occasional assistance in the quest. Mahoney adheres sharply to the rule of Chekhov's gun; every situation is critical, and each detail required, down to the shape of a bloodstain. The result is a grave yet hilarious meditation on insanity, depression, companionship, and leaving everything behind. (May)

A Taste of Sage

Yaffa S. Santos. Harper, \$15.99 trade paper (304p) ISBN 978-0-06-297484-6

Santo cooks up a disappointingly bland

debut romance between chefs. After the failure of Lumi Santana's experimental Dominican restaurant in Manhattan, Lumi reluctantly takes a position as sous chef in Julien Dax's traditional French restaurant. At first, Lumi and Julien butt heads, as Lumi attempts her own spin on traditional dishes, but Julien is attracted by Lumi's beauty, and Lumi—who possesses the ability to discern a chef's emotions when she eats their food—is intrigued by the depth of flavor and feeling in Julien's cooking, and the two begin a romance. After Julien's secretary, Esme, secretly assists in cooking a dessert, Lumi claims she can taste the bitter flavors of Esme's jealousy of Lumi. Still, the women's conflict fails to adequately complicate the plot, which plods along toward its happy ending with few surprises for the protagono-

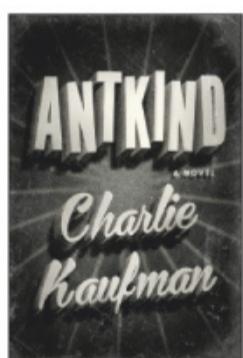
ALRIGHTY THEN

Behold, a screenwriter's love letter to cinema history and an actor's fantastical autofiction.

★ Antkind

Charlie Kaufman. Random House, \$28.99 (720p) ISBN 978-0-399-58968-3

Screenwriter-director Kaufman's debut brims with screwball satire and provocative reflections on how art shapes people's perception of the world. While visiting St. Augustine, Fla., to research a book, B. Rosenberg, a pretentious film historian and critic, crosses paths with Ingo Cutbirth, an elderly former child actor who shows B. an unnamed film created with stop-



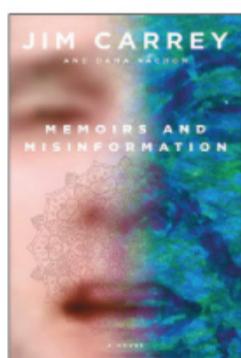
motion puppetry that was 90 years in the making and takes three months to watch. B. appraises the film ("about the artifice of fiction and the paucity of truth in our culture," among many other things), as "the greatest cinematic masterpiece of perhaps all time." After Cutbirth dies, he bequeaths the film to B., who loses it in a car fire and spends the rest of the novel

consulting with therapists, desperate to reconstruct his experience of the film. Along the way, B. suffers a series of comic setbacks in his career and personal life, which leave him wondering, "Where does the movie end and my mind begin?" The Pynchonesque scope of Kaufman's novel gives him liberty to have his opinionated narrator comment on innumerable cultural touchstones, especially in cinema, where B. throws shade with tongue firmly in cheek at filmmaker Charlie Kaufman, whom he derides as "a monster unaware of his staggering ineptitude." B.'s outsized personality and his giddily freewheeling experiences make this picaresque irresistible. (May)

Memoirs and Misinformation

Jim Carrey and Dana Vachon. Knopf, \$27.95 (272p) ISBN 978-0-525-65597-8

Carrey's frenetic debut is a cartoonish fever dream darkened by middle-aged loneliness and existential terror. The story—written in the third person with Vachon (*Mergers and Acquisitions*) about an actor named Jim Carrey who found fame and fortune in blockbusters such as *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective* and creative fulfillment in *Eternal Sunshine of the*



Spotless Mind—begins in medias res with Jim holed up in his Brentwood, Calif., fortress, feeling low enough to accept a role in the loathsome animated feature *Hungry Hungry Hippos in Digital 3-D*. The authors then jump back in time to Jim's short, disastrous marriage to a cable action star and an aborted Charlie Kaufman-penned Mao Zedong biopic amid flashes of Jim's bleak memories of growing up in Toronto. In between, Jim spars with his friend Nicholas Cage ("We battle ancient mojo in my black sand shadow dojo") and rants against capitalism and Hollywood. A surprisingly touching moment occurs on the set of *Hippos*, where Jim meets the digital essence of his idol, Rodney Dangerfield, who pays tribute to Jim's dead father. But for the most part, the characters are underdeveloped, and the sketchy plot loses momentum amid interchangeable set pieces. Dip in for the laughs, but slip out before the closing credits. Agent: David Kuhn, Aevitas Creative Management. (May)

The TALE of the CHRISTMAS HERO

by Carolyn Mitchell
illustrated by Brenda Timms

Through delightful, easy-read poetry and enchanting illustrations, the author and artist relate a whimsical tale of a little field mouse's unlikely encounter with Santa and his reindeer on Christmas Eve. The colorful imagery created by this book's verse and corresponding artwork will amuse and fascinate the reader as it brings the story to vibrant life. The storyteller immediately beckons each reader to perceive his or her own hometown as the one nearly missed by the frolicking reindeer's diversion. This personalizes the anticipation as each aspect of the story unfolds. The tale begins with an exciting race as the frisky reindeer suddenly abandon their Christmas delivery work to plunge Santa's sleigh into a furious chase after a startled field mouse. The fun continues as the mouse's escape plan finally outwits the reindeer. Their resulting predicament was clearly spelling disaster for Santa's ability to complete his Christmas Eve duties! But then . . . in a delightful turn of events, the Christmas team is rescued through another ingenious plan by the soft-hearted mouse and his recruited bear helpers. The story ends happily with Santa's Christmas Eve mission restored and the little mouse suitably rewarded by his new friends for his heroic efforts. The Tale of a Christmas Hero is a captivating children's book that is sure to charm readers of all ages.

Having retired from a successful nursing career, Carolyn Mitchell now enthusiastically embraces her life-long interest in writing and poetic expression. Carolyn has always appreciated the versatility of the English language with its colorful colloquialisms and finds particular pleasure in articulating various idioms and dialects through rhyme. Children's literature has had special appeal to Carolyn over the years as she found reading to her children and grandchildren to be one of the purest delights in life. This Christmas story allows her to combine her passions for children, writing, and the holiday of her heart into one glorious venture. Carolyn lives on a farm near Hickman, Nebraska, with her husband Daryl. There they raised 3 daughters -- Becky, Christy, and Mandy, and now delight in visits from their 5 grandchildren -- Christian, Brandon, Austin, Kirstin, Haley, Ryann, and Erynn.

ISBN # : 9781643613499



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 Westwood Books
PUBLISHING

BARNES & NOBLE

nists and little to no character development for Santos's supporting cast of largely indistinguishable colleagues and friends. Santos's creativity and humor, however, shine through occasionally in the recipes that accompany many chapters (for Lumi's Rice Chex Smoothie, preparation instructions simply read, "Don't"; others, such as a bouillabaisse with rouille, sound appetizing). Unfortunately, her recipe for romance is not equally inspired. *Agent: Nick Owen, Pontas Literary & Film Agency.* (May)

Universe of Two

Stephen P. Kiernan. Morrow, \$27.99 (464p)
ISBN 978-0-06-287844-1

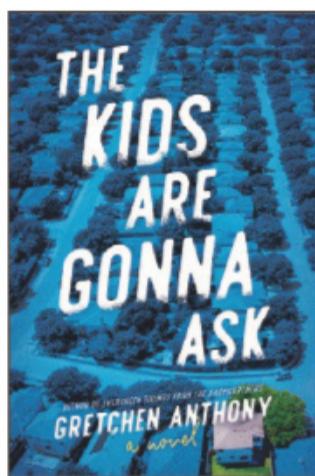
Kiernan's lackluster fourth novel (after 2017's *The Baker's Secret*) concerns 19-year-old mathematician Charlie Fish, who's called away from his sweetheart, Brenda, to play a pivotal role in constructing the atomic bomb. Charlie bonds with Brenda at her family's Chicago music store during his breaks from working on a secret government project at a nearby university. When Charlie is recruited as part of the team sent to Los Alamos, Brenda doesn't understand the scope of Charlie's work, and doesn't cope well with his absence and cryptic letters. Despite this, the two pine for one another, and Brenda accepts a job as a Santa Fe church organist to be closer to him. Burdened with guilt over his work's destructive power and sworn to secrecy, Charlie relies on Brenda for strength before and especially after the bombings in Japan. The details of Los Alamos are fascinating, but characterization isn't Kiernan's strong suit; he only scratches the surface of his protagonists, and the story of their courtship, which takes up a good chunk of the novel, falls flat. This feels like a generic love story with the Manhattan Project tacked on for emotional heft. (May)

The Kids Are Gonna Ask

Gretchen Anthony. Park Row, \$17.99 trade paper (416p) ISBN 978-0-7783-0874-4

In Anthony's brisk coming-of-age story (after *Evergreen Tidings from the Baumgartners*), a high school podcast project goes viral when the hosts search for their unknown father. Sophomores Thomas and Savannah McClaire have lived with their grandmother, Maggie, in Minneapolis, since the death of their mother, Bess, two years earlier. The twins

launch a podcast called *McClaire Dinner Salon*, documenting conversations between Maggie and her acquaintances. For a year, the twins' audience plateaus at 300 listeners, until an episode addresses the mystery of their biological father's identity, which attracts interest from Guava Media and a



sensational producer whose credits include *It's Only Murder*. As the teens work with Guava, their audience grows and the show attracts national media attention. One of the

show's previous guests, a friend of Bess's from college, questions the ethics of the show on a talk radio program ("They're kids. Asking very personal questions about a very private matter"). As Anthony reveals in an early flash-forward, the twins become overwhelmed and lock themselves in Maggie's house, with protestors and supporters crowding outside. Anthony's story is full of surprises and thoughtful reflections on the expiration date for family secrets. Like a successfully twisty podcast, this delivers the goods. (May)

Summer Longing

Jamie Brenner. Little, Brown, \$28 (384p)
ISBN 978-0-316-47685-0

Brenner (*The Forever Summer*) takes readers to a small Cape Cod beach community where an abandoned baby becomes the talk of the town. When newly retired Ruth Cooperman moves to Provincetown, Mass., she is hoping to slow down. Then she finds an abandoned baby on the front porch of her rented beach house. Couple Elise and Fern move back in to the cottage they rented to Ruth to care for the infant rather than call the authorities, and Ruth's quiet retirement becomes even more crowded after her estranged daughter, Olivia, agrees to visit, while Ruth continues her search for a house to buy. As Ruth and her daughter address Olivia's sense of abandonment by her mother, Elise and Fern bond with the baby and dream of making her their own. However, the mystery of the baby's mother lurks in the background, and Ruth's tenuous relationship with her daughter, as

well as the connections created as the town comes together to support Elise, Fern, and the baby, will soon be tested. While Brenner gets off to a slow, muddled start, she eventually finds her footing and achieves a satisfying ending. This touching, nuanced summer yarn delivers the goods. (May)

Two Truths and a Lie

Meg Mitchell Moore. Morrow, \$27.99 (336p)
ISBN 978-0-06-284009-7

Moore (*The Arrivals*) serves up an uneven tale about a group of privileged mothers and the secrets they keep. Sherri Griffin and her 11-year-old daughter, Katie, move to Newburyport, Mass., where the drinks always flow and the gossip runs rampant. Sherri and Katie are running—but from what? Meanwhile, rising high school senior Alexa can't wait to leave Newburyport for Los Angeles—but after reading the explosive secrets in Katie's diary during a babysitting gig, she has drama to spare. Alexa's mother, Rebecca, is still mourning her late husband when she starts a relationship with Daniel, one of Alexa's high school teachers, while trying to keep tabs on Alexa and her fifth-grade sister, Morgan, one of Katie's besties. While the author's elegant prose shines, the plot meanders, and the frequent shifts in point of view make it difficult to forge a strong connection to any of the characters. A subplot emerges when Alexa finds clues that suggest Sherri and Kate are in the witness protection program, but it never takes off, and the book fades to a whimper. Frequent texts, social media posts, and bursts of first-person-plural narration add to the cacophony. Moore is talented, but this isn't her best. (May)

The Trumpet Lesson

Dianne Romain. She Writes, \$16.95 trade paper (336p) ISBN 978-1-63-152598-8

Romain's enchanting debut delves into the complex personalities of two friends living in the mountains of central Mexico. Callie Quinn is an anxiety-ridden expatriate American nearing 50, and Armando García is a vivacious 30-year-old orchestral musician. Both are transplants in Guanajuato; Armando settled in the town to be near his mentor, the local symphony conductor, and Callie, who works as a Spanish and French translator of technical documents, decided to buy a house there after visiting

the town's museum. After Armando hears about Callie's translation skills, he requests help from her with French grammar to better correspond with his French lover. Armando is consumed by worries about his missing dog and long-distance relationship, while Callie works to build a serene new life amid painful memories from her early years. Callie is a stabilizing force in Armando's life, and his charisma helps her confront her debilitating shyness and its quirky manifestations, such as her habit of mentally alphabetizing her seasonings when she's stressed. Armando arranges trumpet lessons for Callie, and playing the instrument provides her with some relief ("It was addictive, that sensation of resonance"). Romain's insights into the characters' flaws enrich this story of friendship, along with prose that is sometimes droll, often fervent, and always engrossing. This is worth a look. (*Self-published*)

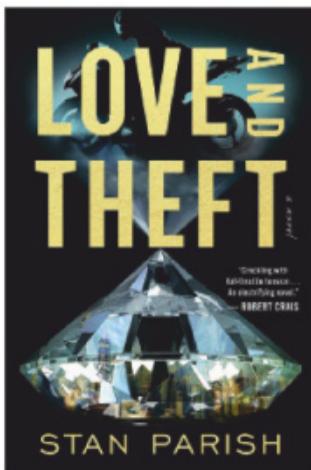
Mystery/Thriller

Love and Theft

Stan Parish. Doubleday, \$26.95 (288p)
ISBN 978-0-385-54524-2

Parish's solid page-turner, a loose sequel to 2014's *Down the Shore*, centers on a New Jersey single mother, Diane Alison, whose grown son, Tom, was the previous novel's protagonist. Diane knows that Clay, Tom's father, was involved in illegal activities before he died decades earlier, but she learns more about Clay's past after meeting the charismatic Alex Cassidy, who turns out to have once worked with Clay. The two are instantly attracted to each other, and Diane ends up agreeing to spend a weekend at Alex's beach house in Mexico. She's stunned when Alex reveals that he was the mastermind behind a recent \$22 million jewel heist in Vegas, but—in large part

because of his feelings toward Diane—he vows to quit the business forever. Before Diane can decide whether she wants to continue the relationship, Tom and Alex's adult



daughter, Paolo, who are lovers, are kidnapped, and Alex is forced to complete one more job. Well-developed characters, relentless pacing, palpable levels of tension throughout, and a notable closing twist make this a winner. Parish is a thriller writer to watch. *Agent: Julie Barer, Book Group. (July)*

Dead West

Matt Goldman. Forge, \$26.99 (320p)
ISBN 978-1-250-19134-2

In bestseller Goldman's excellent third mystery featuring Minneapolis PI Nils Shapiro (after 2019's *The Shallows*), Beverly Mayer, a grumpy matriarch, hires Nils to check on her grown grandson, Ebben, who she believes is wasting his time in the movie business. Ebben, whose fiancée has just died, is trying to launch a creator-focused studio, but Nils suspects that Ebben's fiancée was murdered and that Ebben himself might have been the target. Along with his good friend Jameson White—a nurse and former athlete fighting inner demons after being on shift during a school shooting—Nils dives into the L.A. scene, meeting mysterious Eastern European mobsters, attractive screenwriters, powerful agents, and plenty of others who might have wanted to kill Ebben. Goldman wisely keeps the Hollywood satire to a minimum, focusing instead on the actual detective work, the very real dangers Nils faces, and emotionally grueling issues Jameson is attempting to process. Goldman takes a classic trope—a working-class private detective set loose in Hollywood—and squeezes enough originality out of it to make for a dazzling tale. *Agent: Jennifer Weltz, Jean V. Naggar Literary. (June)*

Imperfect Women

Araminta Hall. MCD, \$27 (304p) ISBN 978-0-374-27258-6

This heart-wrenching psychological thriller from British author Hall (*Our Kind of Cruelty*) charts the fraught lives of three best friends from university. Nancy Hennessy has stayed ostensibly close to Eleanor Meakins and Mary Smithson in the nearly three decades since they were at Oxford together. When Nancy is murdered after meeting with her secret lover, Eleanor's affair with Nancy's husband becomes so engrossing and guilt-wracked that it keeps Eleanor from helping Mary

with her husband's illness. Three successive narratives center on the interior life of each woman: Eleanor immediately after the murder, Nancy in the time leading up to her death, and Mary further along in the murder's aftermath. Hall shows each woman being emotionally drawn to doing something she knows is awful, revolting against feeling trapped, and feeling separated from her support system by guilt, evoking both empathy and outrage in the reader. The suspense alone is crafted skillfully enough to hold interest, but the dark portrait of the stifling nature of contemporary womanhood makes this story really stick. *Agent: Lizzy Kremer, David Higham (U.K.). (June)*

The Dilemma

B.A. Paris. St. Martin's, \$27.99 (352p)
ISBN 978-1-250-15136-0

Destructive secrets abound in this maddeningly melodramatic psychological thriller from bestseller Paris (*Bring Me Back*). Adam Harman is busy preparing for his wife Livia's 40th birthday party, an event for a hundred guests under a marquee tent in their backyard in Windsor, England. Adam is expecting their 19-year-old daughter, Marnie, who's studying in Hong Kong, to make a surprise appearance at the party. But as he and 22-year-old son Josh set up chairs and choose a playlist, Adam learns that Marnie may have died in a plane crash in Cairo. His quandary is whether he should tell Livia and ruin her evening's happiness. Livia, on the other hand, has discovered a highly personal fact that Marnie has withheld from both parents. Does she tell Adam and affect his relationship with Marnie? The novel bounces back and forth between guilt-ridden lies and deceitful behavior, such as Livia's betrayal of Adam. By the end, the reader is likely to feel frustrated by a psychological thriller that withholds information for far too long. Debilitating circumstances aren't enough to excuse egregious behavior of reprehensible characters. *150,000-copy announced first printing. Agent: Camilla Bolton, Darley Anderson Agency (U.K.). (June)*

The Voter File

David Pepper. Putnam, \$27 (432p) ISBN 978-0-593-08393-2

Pepper's timely third novel featuring

[Q&A]

PW TALKS WITH KAREN LEE STREET

Killing Edgar

Street's trilogy conclusion, *Edgar Allan Poe and the Empire of the Dead* (Pegasus Crime, May; reviewed on p. 41), sends the writer to Paris to team with his fictional sleuth, Chevalier Dupin.

Do you think Poe has been misunderstood?

Poe is often misperceived as a dissolute, tortured genius and friendless alcoholic and drug addict—a reputation cultivated by his detractors. Poe was actually very happily married, worked hard at his craft, had a sense of humor, was a good athlete, and was described as attractive.

What surprised you the most about him?

The joy Poe took in hoaxes. He wrote several stories that were originally presented as nonfiction and told some tall tales about himself. "The Great Balloon Hoax" was published in *The Sun* newspaper in 1844 as a factual account of the first trans-

Atlantic balloon crossing; a vague retraction was printed two days later. "The Journal of Julius Rodman," the purported diary of an explorer, and "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," an account of a hypnotism experiment, were both suggested to be true stories. Poe also claimed in an autobiographical note that he'd embarked on an adventure to fight with the Greeks, but ended up imprisoned in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Why did you open with a section set soon before the actual Poe's death, which ends with him anticipating



that he will be murdered?

That's my little homage to Billy Wilder and film noir, particularly *Double Indemnity* and *Sunset Boulevard*. I imagined Poe as the hero on a downward spiral in *Empire of the Dead*, due to the loss of his wife. It also supports the theme—what we leave behind when we're gone. Presenting Poe's imminent death at the beginning of the novel, and the suggestion that attempts were made on his life before, adds a sense of doom and suggests that Poe the narrator is coming to terms with his own demise by reexamining his adventures in Paris with Dupin. Poe's dying hope that Dupin might find his murderer tells us that Dupin lives on, as of course he does in Poe's stories.

In what ways has your work in film affected your writing of fiction in general, and the three Poe books in particular?

I found it necessary to outline the mysteries, so the discipline of writing treatments and tricks I learned about structuring films were very useful. The same applies to writing character backstories. My experience in analyzing scripts helped in stepping back and trying to look objectively at what I had written while revising. Certainly, I visualized the novels as films in my head and then described what I was "seeing."

—LENNY PICKER

reporter Jack Sharpe (after 2018's *The Wingman*) finds Sharpe, recently let go from his network TV job, drawn into freelancing by the surprising results in an obscure Wisconsin judicial election, where a heavily favored incumbent inexplicably lost to a neophyte. A low-level staffer who worked for the winning candidate explains to Sharpe that someone must have hacked the incumbent's voter file, a treasure trove of semi-private and sometimes confidential information that both Democrats and Republicans keep on their registrants. Sharpe, a burned-out but nonetheless savvy journalist, logically wonders: why use such a potent political weapon to influence the result of such an inconsequential race? Sharpe has to fend off a brutal hit man as he gets on the trail of a foreign plot to take over entire segments of the U.S. economy. Never mind that the action spins into the overly dramatic toward the end. Pepper offers a well-researched, gripping look at one of the many perilous wrinkles in the electoral system. *Agent: Mitch Hoffman, Aaron M. Priest Literary.* (June)

Tower of Babel

Michael Sears. Soho Crime, \$27.95 (400p)
ISBN 978-1-6412-9195-8

This action-packed series launch from Thriller Award finalist Sears (*Black Fridays*) introduces Ted Molloy, a down-on-his-heels former lawyer who now works as a foreclosure profiteer seeking "surplus money" in Queens, N.Y. Molloy's choice to break his first rule of business—taking on a job where the money at stake is large enough to involve underhanded and scheming characters willing to knock off anyone who gets in the way—results in the shooting death of his research partner, Richie Rubiano. Richie's widow, Cheryl, hair "dyed the color of fresh lemons," hires Molloy to find Richie's killer. Molloy's quest for the culprit leads him to several crooked politicians, a disreputable banker, a nefarious real estate developer, the Russian mafia, a neighborhood activist, and his manipulative ex-father-in-law, who happens to be a retired judge. The whole crew is messed up in conspiracy, fraud, bribery, and murder. Razor-edged prose, sharply defined characters, and a fast-paced plot boost this noir-wrought drama. Fans of Raymond Chandler and classic gangster films will be rewarded.

Agent: Judith Weber, Sobol Weber Assoc. (June)

Seven Years of Darkness

You-Jeong Jeong, trans. from the Korean by Chi-Young Kim. Penguin, \$17 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-0-14-313424-4

In 2004, when Choi Sowon, the narrator of this riveting novel by Jeong (*The Good Son*), was 11 years old, his father, Choi Hyonsu, the head of security at Seryong Dam, was arrested for killing his wife and an 11-year-old girl and her father—and for causing more deaths after opening the dam floodgates above Seryong Village. Hyonsu was convicted of mass murder and sent to prison, and an uncle in Seoul adopted Sowon. Seven years later, when Sowon receives a mysterious manuscript in the mail purporting to tell what really happened in 2004, Sowon realizes he faces a serious threat. Readers may think they know the full story, but the atmospheric plot unfolds in unexpected directions. Jeong does a good job making the unlikeable Hyonsu deserving of sympathy, though some may wish she focused less on the past and more on Sowon's current predicament. A rushed ending also disappoints. But these are minor flaws. This twisty tale reinforces Jeong's place as the queen of South Korean thrillers. *Agent: Barbara Zitwer, Barbara J. Zitwer Agency. (June)*

The Art of Deception: A Daughter of Sherlock Holmes Mystery

Leonard Goldberg. Minotaur, \$26.99 (320p) ISBN 978-1-250-22420-0

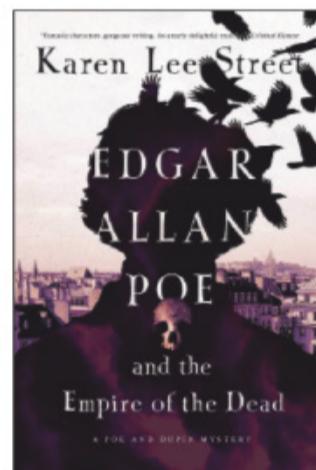
At the start of Goldberg's pleasing if flawed fourth Daughter of Sherlock Holmes mystery (after 2019's *The Disappearance of Alistair Ainsworth*), Inspector Lestrade calls on Dr. John Watson, Joanna Blalock, and Joanna's husband, Dr. John Watson Jr., at 221b Baker Street shortly before Christmas 1916. Lestrade needs their help catching the vandal slashing costly paintings in London's West End. Joanna deduces that the culprit is seeking something—perhaps another artwork—hidden behind one of them. All the canvases have been repaired at the elite but financially troubled Hawke and Evans art gallery by Harry Edmunds and James Blackstone, making them prime suspects. But since Edmunds has apparently died in an explosion, while Blackstone has fled to Australia, neither man can be

questioned. When Joanna's son, Johnny, comes home from Eton, he adds his own astute analysis to the case. The overly talky investigation and lack of dramatic action may disappoint some readers. Holmes lovers will enjoy the intricate Sherlockian reasoning Joanna and Johnny bring to the puzzle. *Agent: Scott Mendel, Mendel Media Group. (June)*

★ Edgar Allan Poe and the Empire of the Dead

Karen Lee Street. Pegasus Crime, \$25.95 (352p) ISBN 978-1-64313-422-2

The ominous prologue of the terrific concluding volume of Street's Poe trilogy (after 2018's *Edgar Allan Poe and the Jewel of Peru*) takes place in Baltimore in October 1849, just days before the real Poe died. Poe has a vision of his dead wife and an apothecary dispensing poison, which



reveals the truth about how he "had finally been murdered and by whom." Flash back to June. The writer gets a letter from his friend C. Auguste Dupin, entreating him to come to

Paris. Dupin needs his help tracking down Ernest Valdemar, who's responsible for sending Dupin's grandparents to the guillotine during the French Revolution. When the two friends meet, Dupin tells Poe he's sure Valdemar forged the letter and had reason to lure Poe to Paris. Valdemar appears to be working with Poe's nemesis, George Reynolds, whose father was falsely imprisoned for the assaults of more than 50 women that were committed by Poe's maternal grandparents decades earlier. Street fulfills the promise of the tantalizing opening with a twisty and nail-biting plot. Fans of other superior fictional treatments of Poe will be enthralled. *Agent: Oli Munson, A.M. Heath (U.K.). (May)*

Black Flag

David Ricciardi. Berkley, \$27 (384p) ISBN 978-1-9848-0466-2

Ricciardi's exciting third Jake Keller thriller (after 2019's *Rogue Strike*) finds the CIA officer and his agency partner, John

Pickens, in Mogadishu, Somalia, seeking to identify the mastermind behind the bandits who have been using high-speed skiffs to attack oil tankers. After killing the crews, the bandits seize the oil and sell it on the black market. The two most promising suspects are Badeed, chief elder of the Hawiye clan, and Yaxaas, the warlord of the Darwood clan. Yaxaas keeps a pet alligator named Little Yaxaas, and it's no surprise what Little Yaxaas's job is in the organization. Keller has a plan to lure the mastermind out of hiding, but the mission is complicated by a secret agenda originating from CIA headquarters. The appealing leads have complimentary strengths. Pickens is old school, interested in human intelligence, while Keller comes from an analysis background and is adept with technology. The complicated plot and furious action build to a final, head-snapping twist. Ricciardi has hit his stride with this outing. *Agent: Rick Richter, Aevitas Creative Management. (May)*

Worse Angels

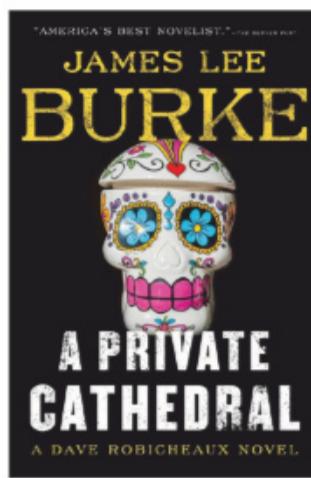
Laird Barron. Putnam, \$27 (336p) ISBN 978-0-593-08499-1

In Barron's disappointing third Isaiah Coleridge novel (after 2019's *Black Mountain*), Badja Adeyemi, "a right bastard of an ex-NYPD cop," hires PI Coleridge, a former mob strong-arm man, to look into the case of his nephew, Sean Pruitt, who died at the construction site of a supercollider in upstate New York four years earlier. The official inquiry pointed to suicide, but certain details don't fit, and Adeyemi wants "a bad news sonofabitch with a gun" to find some answers. When Coleridge travels to the site and starts asking questions, things quickly become strange. Locals are reluctant to talk about Pruitt's death or the mysterious activities that take place at the project at night. The investigation soon involves mysticism, hypnotic suggestion, fringe science, human sacrifice, and the Mares of Thrace, a violent pagan cult presided over by a prominent businessman. Unfortunately, these undeveloped plot elements tend to distract from the central mystery rather than advance it. The resolution comes almost as an afterthought. Barron fans will hope for a return to form next time. *Agent: Janet Reid, Janet Reid Literary. (May)*

★ A Private Cathedral: A Dave Robicheaux Novel

James Lee Burke. Simon & Schuster, \$28 (384p) ISBN 978-1-9821-5168-3

A centuries-long feud between two warring criminal families might be coming to an end in MWA Grand Master Burke's superb 23rd novel featuring New Iberia, La., cop Dave Robicheaux (after 2019's *New Iberia Blues*), set loosely sometime before 9/11. Those who want to forge a union between the two clans, the Shondells and the Balangies, are pressuring teenage rock 'n' roller Johnny Shondell to deliver Isolde Balangie, his teenage girlfriend and fellow singer, to his powerful, corrupt, and much older uncle, Mark Shondell, for what amounts to an arranged marriage. Johnny and Isolde decide to go on the run instead. Robicheaux's efforts on behalf of the young couple lead to his developing a close relationship with Isolde's mother, which causes a conflict of interest. Meanwhile, the lawman must deal with Gideon Richetti, a time-traveling golem. Gideon, whom Burke presents unabashedly as a supernatural being, appears to have pure malevolence on his mind, but he turns out to be a far more complicated creation. Along the way to the wild and bloody climax, alcoholic Vietnam vet Robicheaux contends with his various personal demons and gets some much needed help from PI pal Clete Purcell. An imaginative blend of crime and other genres, Burke's existential drama is both exquisitely executed and profoundly moving. *Agent: Philip Spitzer, Philip G. Spitzer Literary. (May)*



Skin Deep: A Siobhan O'Brien Mystery

Sung J. Woo. Agora, \$16.95 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-1-947993-95-2

This winning series launch from Woo (*Love Love*) introduces PI Siobhan O'Brien, a 40-year-old American of Korean descent who was adopted in infancy by an Irish father and a Norwegian mother. After two years working as an operative at the Ed Baker Investigative Agency in Athena, N.Y., Siobhan, to her surprise, inherits the agency when her boss has a fatal heart attack. Her first client as the new owner is Josie Sykes, the white sister of a deceased childhood friend and fellow Korean adoptee. Josie's 18-year-old adopted Korean daughter, Penny, is missing and was last seen at Llewellyn College. Siobhan enrolls in a program for older students and soon becomes aware of the danger that lurks on Llewellyn's seemingly placid campus. Siobhan holds her own as she contends with deadly doings at a yoga center, menacing college initiations, and bizarre researchers studying "the science of beauty." Woo perceptively explores the theme of image

and personal identity throughout. Readers will look forward to seeing more of the beguiling Siobhan. *Agent: Priya Doraswamy, Lotus Lane Literary. (May)*

The Devil's Bones

Carolyn Haines. Minotaur, \$26.99 (320p) ISBN 978-1-250-25786-4

Haines's lively 21st mystery featuring PI Sarah Booth Delaney (after 2019's *Game of Bones*) takes Sarah Booth on an Easter trip to Lucedale, Miss., with her friends Tinkie Richmond and Cece Dee Falcon. While visiting a miniature Holy Land created by theologian Daniel Reynolds, they discover the body of unscrupulous lawyer Perry Slay, who had no shortage of enemies. As Slay was poisoned, the local sheriff views Erik Ward, a pharmacist with knowledge of poisons who was suing Slay for swindling his ill father, as the chief suspect. Erik hires Sarah Booth and Tinkie to prove his innocence. The women uncover further grudges against Slay—and against Reynolds for causing environmental problems with his Holy Land attraction, and against Erik for his secret

success as a competitive ballroom dancer. When other corpses crop up, including that of Erik's former dance partner, and Erik repeatedly disappears, the exasperated investigators can't help wondering whether Erik is guilty. Loyalties among friends and families provide much of the story's charm. Cozy fans will have fun.

Agent: Marian Young, Young Agency. (May)

The Guest List

Lucy Foley. Morrow, \$27.99 (320p) ISBN 978-0-06-286893-0

Set on a remote island off the Irish coast where a massacre once occurred, this entertaining if uneven mystery from Foley (*The Hunting Party*) opens just after the high-profile wedding of Will Slater, the star of the reality TV show *Survive the Night*, and Julia Keegan, an online magazine editor. During the reception, the lights go out, prompting a "scream of terror," which turns out to have come from a server, who reports having seen a lot of blood. Flashbacks from various perspectives, including the bride and her sister, the maid of honor, recount what preceded the server's grim discovery—a body. Meanwhile, Julia is on edge after having received an anonymous note warning her not to marry Will, because he's not who he seems. Foley defers disclosing the murder victim's identity until quite late, but she undercuts the suspense with obvious indications of who it is. The tension of the setup isn't quite matched by the reveals, though the nicely creepy setting compensates somewhat. Readers seeking thrills will find plenty. *Agent: Alexandra Machinist, ICM Partners. (May)*

★ The Darkling Halls of Ivy

Edited by Lawrence Block. Subterranean, \$50 (328p) ISBN 978-1-59606-965-7

Set in and around colleges and universities, the 17 new stories and one reprint in this top-notch anthology explore the forbidding side of academia. As Block (the Bernie Rhodenbarr mysteries) notes in his droll introduction, each of the varied, well-told tales is "as individual as fingerprints." Among the standouts are David Morrell's devious "Requiem for a Homecoming," in which two alumni cast suspicion on each other while debating a 20-year-old murder; Ian Rankin's riveting "The Reasoners," concerning the cover-up of a murder at a secret society in an ancient British univer-

sity; and Reed Farrel Coleman's chilling "An Even Three," about a psychopath at a liberal arts college. Elsewhere, themes veer from rivalry, rape, and survival of the fittest, to plagiarism, academic ghost-writing, and unsavory alternative employment beyond the ivy-covered walls. Creepy oddities include Owen King's tale of heroism, "That Golden Way," A.J. Hartley's supernatural "Rounded with a Sleep," and Jane Hamilton's superlative "Writing Maeve Dubinsky," about the appropriation of another person's work. Crime fiction fans won't want to miss this exemplary compilation. *Agent: Danny Baror, Baror International.* (May)

Hunting Ground

Meghan Holloway. Polis, \$16.95 trade paper (320p) ISBN 978-1-947993-98-3

Holloway (*Once unto the Breach*) travels familiar terrain in this unremarkable serial killer novel. Evelyn Hutto has moved from Georgia, where she survived a traumatic experience that left her wary of all men, to Raven's Gap, Mont., to work as the assistant collections manager at the Park County Museum. Unfortunately for her, the local bookstore owner, Jeff Roosevelt, is a predator, who views meeting Evelyn as a "good omen" that reawakens his misogynistic, murderous tendencies. Jeff's violent streak isn't a complete secret; police officer Hector Lewis, who's nearing retirement, is still hoping to find evidence to implicate him in the disappearance, 15 years earlier, of Lewis's wife and daughter. The plot unfolds from the perspectives of these three main characters. Jeff's chapters open, heavy-handedly, with quotes from such notorious serial murderers as Albert Fish and Jeffrey Dahmer. Readers should be prepared for minimal suspense. Neither the prose nor the characters leave much of an impression. (May)

Postmark Berlin

Anne Emery. ECW, \$25.95 (396p) ISBN 978-1-77041-387-0

At the start of Arthur Ellis Award-winner Emery's gripping 11th Collins-Burke mystery (after 2018's *Through the Heavens Fall*), Fr. Brennan Burke gets a visit from his bishop in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The bishop berates Burke for having been drunk the night before and forgetting to meet with a parishioner, Meika Keller, who wanted to talk to him. Meika's body



had washed up on a Halifax beach that morning. Alban MacNair, a neighbor of Meika who was seen arguing with her, is charged with her murder.

Burke's lawyer friend, Monty Collins, who defends MacNair in court, says that it's a case of suicide. Feeling guilty, Burke sets out to discover what happened to Meika. Guided by a postcard showing the former East German Stasi headquarters sent to Meika with a Berlin postmark, Burke travels to what was once East Berlin, from where Meika claimed to have escaped with her young daughter in 1974. The roller-coaster ride to learn who Meika was and what led to her death will keep the reader guessing along with Burke and Collins. Fans of analytic detective stories will be pleased. (May)

★ Lake of Darkness

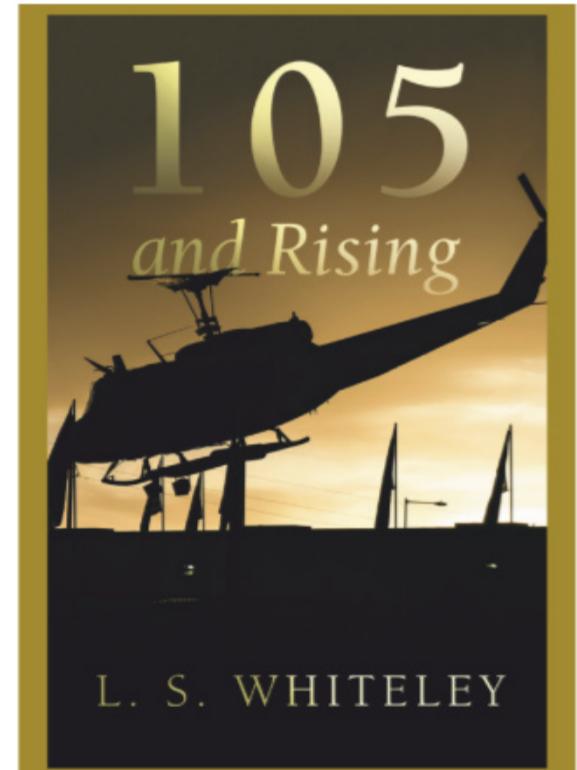
Scott Kenemore. Talos, \$15.99 trade paper (264p) ISBN 978-1-945863-50-9

This superb blend of noir and horror from Kenemore (*Zombie, Ohio*) centers on the search for a serial killer who targets twins in WWI-era Chicago, starting with two 10-year-old African-Americans, a brother and sister, whose heads are cut off and switched. Other murders follow in which black children's heads are severed and then attached to their siblings' torsos. Mayor Big Bill Thompson, who has eyes on the White House, is concerned that the killings could harm Chicago's reputation and stem the migration of African-Americans from the South. Thompson gives Joe "Flip" Flippity, one of Chicago's few black cops, carte blanche to solve the case. Flip is aided by such unusual allies as the Amazing Drexel Tark, a magician whose illusions employ his own twin brother, and elderly Ursula Green, who uses a crystal ball animated by a supernatural force "larger and stronger than herself." Kenemore keeps the tension high throughout. Fans of gritty urban fantasy will want to read more from this gifted writer. (May)

Little Altar Boy

John Guzlowski. Kasva, \$14.95 trade paper (322p) ISBN 978-1-948403-15-3

Set in 1967, Guzlowski's downbeat sequel to 2018's *Suitcase Charlie* finds hard-bitten, morally upright Chicago police detective Hank Purcell looking into some grim crimes. At the urging of Sister Mary Philomena, Hank and his quirky, iconoclastic partner, Marvin Bondarowicz, both WWII vets with memories of terrible things that men can do, confront a pedophile priest at her church, but the man denies the allegations. Days later, Sister Mary is found dead in the church basement, stabbed three dozen times. The church stonewalls the investigation. Meanwhile, Hank's 19-year-old daughter, Margaret, goes missing. His inquiries make it clear she's fallen in with a bad, druggy crowd. When an 11-year-old altar boy is discovered hanged in a closet, the bleakness of the world really hits Hank and Marvin, who resort to their fists and the bottle while failing to get much traction



April 1975. The Fall of Saigon. Chaos and Confusion. Desperation and Despair. Panic and Death. As the North Vietnamese Army closes in, a team of five former American servicemen reenter Saigon. Their mission: to "liberate" the gold reserve of South Vietnam. Things begin to go wrong from the start, and rapidly proceed to get worse.

with either of the murder cases. The resolution of the crimes—including Margaret's disappearance—brings little satisfaction to either the dogged detectives or the reader. This is strictly for those who prefer the darkest of hard-boiled fiction. (*May*)

Dead Week: A Cassandra Sato Mystery

Kelly Brakenhoff. Emerald Prairie, \$12.99 trade paper (322p) ISBN 978-1-733742-42-9

In Brakenhoff's straightforward second Cassandra Sato mystery (after 2019's *Death by Dissertation*), Cassandra, the vice president of student affairs at Nebraska's Morton College, has to deal with more than one difficult situation. Morton's Dead Week—the week right before finals that's intended as a "period of substantial and predictable QUIET study time"—may be disrupted by plans by some deaf students to launch a protest over what they think is inadequate accommodation by the college administration, including a possible hunger strike and class boycotts. Meanwhile, Rachel Nagle, who was one of the students contemplating protests, is injured after someone pushes her down on the ice, but she has trouble getting people to believe it wasn't an accident. Cassandra's sleuthing reveals a possible connection between the attack on Rachel and an older crime. Brakenhoff integrates very real concerns about how to make a college campus truly inclusive into a diverting whodunit. Fans of Jane Langton's Homer Kelly books will be pleased. (*Self-published*)

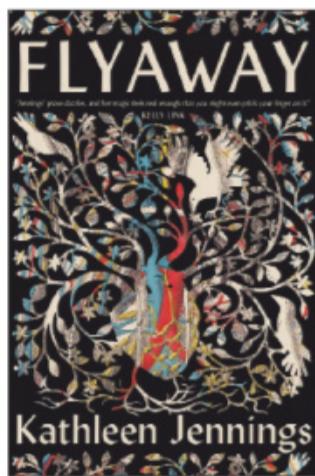
SF/Fantasy/Horror

★ Flyaway

Kathleen Jennings. Tor.com, \$19.99 (176p) ISBN 978-1-250-76187-3

Jennings's wonderful, slim debut pulls readers into an eerie, enchanting fairy tale set in a trio of Australian towns so tiny that they hardly exist. Nineteen-year-old Bettina Scott lives alone with her controlling mother, as her two brothers and father disappeared the same night years before. When Bettina receives a mysterious letter calling her a coward and addressing her by her nickname, "Tink," a name only her brothers and father called her, she sets off to find them through her district's small, dilapidated towns, hoping

to piece together what really happened to them. She recruits her childhood friends Trish Aberdeen and Gary Damson to help her, though they have not spoken to her since the Scott brothers' disappearance and are disconcerted by strange changes



in Bettina, who used to be rebellious and is now compliant. Throughout their search, Jennings weaves tantalizing snippets of short fairy tales that Bettina and her friends grew up

with and, as it slowly becomes clear that the line between fact and fairy tale is rather hazy, Bettina is forced to question her own jumbled memories of her family. In spellbinding, lyrical prose Jennings lulls readers into this rich, dreamlike world. Lovers of contemporary fairy tales and magical realism will find this a masterful work. (*July*)

Road Seven

Keith Rosson. Meerkat, \$17.95 trade paper (270p) ISBN 978-1-946154-29-6

Rosson (*The Mercy of the Tide*) delves into the strange world of cryptozoology in this well wrought speculative tale that is quirky and creepy by turn. Burned-out academic Brian Schutt is desperate for a change when he sees that Mark Sandoval, a celebrity cryptozoologist, bestselling author, and self-proclaimed alien-abductee, is recruiting a research assistant. Though their first meeting reveals Sandoval to be an unstable alcoholic, Brian accepts the position, traveling with Sandoval to Hvíldarland, off the coast of Iceland, to investigate an alleged unicorn sighting. But from the moment they arrive, Brian senses a conspiracy afoot with the people of Hvíldarland. As the truth—about both Hvíldarland and Sandoval's seedy background—comes to light, Rosson makes a powerful case for human nature being just as unknowable and elusive as the unicorn the men are hunting. Rosson shifts from the mundane to the horrible at breakneck speed, creating a sense of unstoppable momentum. Less successful are the sometimes jarring shifts in narrator from

Brian to Sandoval and from third to first person. Still, the blend of genres, from science fiction to cosmic horror, is masterfully executed. Readers will be riveted by this clever, unsettling adventure. (*July*)

The Mythology of Salt and Other Stories

Octavia Cade. Lethe, \$19 trade paper (284p) ISBN 978-1-59021-705-4

This lyrical collection of 18 dark fairy tales showcases New Zealand author Cade's impressive poetic ear but reveals itself to be frustratingly one-note as it goes on. Among the collection's stronger entries are the imagistic "The Atomic Hallows and the Body of Science," which traces the eerie physical transformations of seven Manhattan Project scientists, and the moving title story, which follows a family of indigenous women through several generations. Cade (*The Stone Wētā*) is a master of conjuring dreamlike worlds, but despite the rich prose stylings and immersive atmospherics, the stories lack narrative range and begin to blur into one another as they linger on themes of transformation and violation. The Catholic ghost story "The Knife Orchard," the "Beauty and the Beast" retelling "The Little Beast," and the Māori myth-inspired "The Mussel Eater" all employ the same formal structure as their depictions of domestic abuse situations give rise to revenge. Though each individual tale is beautifully told, bundled together they lose their shine. (*July*)

The Living Dead

George A. Romero and Daniel Kraus. Tor, \$27.99 (656p) ISBN 978-1-250-30512-1

Filmmaker Romero (1940–2017), best known for *Night of the Living Dead*, offers a sweeping look at the rise, fall, and rebirth of humanity in the face of a zombie menace in this long-winded horror novel, posthumously completed by Kraus (*Bent Heavens*). Patient zero appears in "the early months of the 21st century," when a John Doe is registered to the U.S. Census Bureau twice: once upon his death and again after the medical examiner shoots his reawakened body. From there the virus spreads, reaching a large but underdeveloped cast, among them a teenager living in a trailer park, a news anchor who sequesters himself in his studio to continuously broadcast news of the zombie panic even after he's



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no longer sure if anyone's watching, and a chaplain aboard the USS *Olympia* who slowly goes mad. Throughout, the zombie threat is granted its own, second-person perspective: "You are hungry. You wake up. In that order." In this innovation alone Romero paints a fresher picture of the zombie apocalypse, following the zombie's perspective 15 years into the future to examine the lifespan and evolution of the creatures. Otherwise, this doorstopper reads like an extended cut of Romero's horror films. This belabored amalgamation of zombie tropes is epic but familiar. *Agent: Richard Abate, 3 Arts Entertainment. (June)*

Dragon Unleashed

Grace Draven. Ace, \$16 trade paper (416p) ISBN 978-0-451-48977-7

Draven takes readers on a sweet romantic adventure in the solid second fantasy of her Fallen Empire series (after *Phoenix Unbound*). Malachus, a draga trapped in a human body, is searching for a bone from his dead mother that would allow him to return to his true form. His quest takes him through the Krael Empire and puts him in the path of Hilani and her group of human traders, but not before he sustains a serious injury. Though Hilani knows that her uncle has the draga bone and intends to resell it for profit, she risks taking Malachus in to give him the chance to heal. Hilani's illegal talent for elemental sorcery makes her wary around new people, but she cannot deny the pull of Malachus as their attraction blossoms into a powerful bond. But Malachus's single-minded search and Hilani's many secrets throw their relationship into jeopardy. The intimate focus on this slow-burning love story leaves little space for exploration of the larger fantasy world, but the characters are endearing and their mutual respect is palpable. Draven's fans will be pleased by this entertaining if slow-moving series installment. *Agent: Sarah Younger, Nancy Yost Literary Agency. (June)*

★ Firewalkers

Adrian Tchaikovsky. Solaris, \$30 (208p) ISBN 978-1-78108-848-7

Arthur C. Clarke Award-winner Tchaikovsky (*Children of Ruin*) transports readers to a bleak dystopia in this powerful story of class conflict and climate crisis. In the not too distant future, the jungles of

equatorial Africa have been reduced to barren desert and Earth's ultrawealthy flee the planet in a steady stream. The African town of Ankara Achouka exists solely to support a space elevator to the comforts of the *Grand Celeste* space ship. The haves pass through on their way off-planet; the have-nots are left behind in the dust to maintain the town's machinery. When something goes wrong with Ankara Achouka's power supply, it falls to young Firewalker Mao to fix the problem.

Tchaikovsky's lean prose is vividly evocative

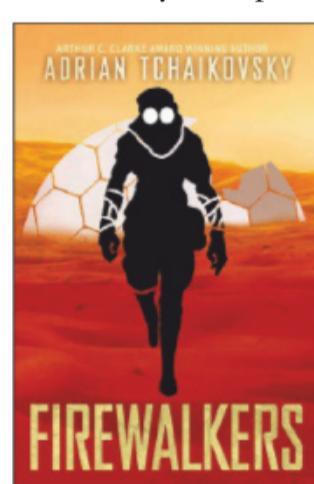
in its pointed simplicity as Mao and his friends make their way to the solar farms in the dangerous wastelands to the south. Crossing the desolate landscape—replete

with dust storms, the carcasses of giant insects, and scientific facilities abandoned to the scorching heat—Mao and his team make a surprising discovery that could be the means to reclaim the Earth, but at an unbearable cost. Tchaikovsky sharply addresses the connection between class and climate, weaving pressing ethical questions into a thrilling adventure. This is a must-read for fans of dystopian and climate change fiction. *Agent: Simon Kavanagh, Mic Cheetham Agency (U.K.). (May)*

The Invisible

Seb Doubinsky. Meerkat, \$14.95 trade paper (206p) ISBN 978-1-946154-27-9

The gritty eighth novel in Doubinsky's City-States series (after 2018's *Missing Signal*) presents an intriguing mystery but underwhelms with a shallowly explored near-future Earth and a less-than-memorable hero. New Babylon is awash in a potent drug called Synth and City Commissioner Georg Ratner, a former cop, is looking into the source of the drug's sudden popularity. Then Ratner's old partner on the force is murdered. Ratner's investigations into both the drug and the death are told in short, staccato bursts. Each section is titled after a tarot card, followed by a strange, associative

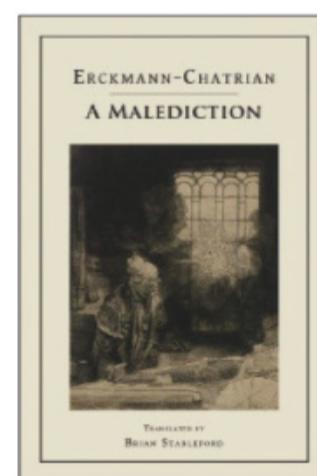


string of descriptors with seemingly little bearing on each other or the larger plot: "The High Priestess: Love is in the air. The desire of gardening. Feeling superstitious. The possibility of understanding something not yet asked. A blowjob. Something divine." This formal conceit is distracting at best and confounding at worst. And, while Doubinsky teases some striking changes that have occurred in his imagined future, he does little to develop them for those first entering the world of the series with this installment. Readers will be left unsatisfied. *(May)*

A Malediction

Erckmann-Chatrian, trans. from the French by Brian Stableford. Snuggly, \$14 trade paper (156p) ISBN 978-1-64525-026-5

This gem of a collection from Erckmann-Catrian, the pseudonym of collaborators Émile Erckmann (1822–1899) and Alexandre Chatrian (1826–1890), contains three haunting tales, all originally published in French in 1849 and united, as translator Stableford notes in his introduction, by a sense of "calculated implausibility." In the melodrama of the title novelette, here translated into English for the first time, a man bears the burden of his mother's deathbed request.



"Rembrandt," about a stolen painting, is notable for featuring the Dutch Golden Age painter as a character. The eerie "Red Wine and White Wine," the shortest and strongest in the collection and the only explicitly fantastical tale, tells of a pair of traveling companions who consume red wine with phantasmagoric properties. Erckmann-Catrian's prose is painterly and bold, combining elements of romanticism, decadence, and Gothicism. Stableford's translations are fresh and engaging, and his helpful footnotes do much to put these tales into context. This powerful showcase of Erckmann-Catrian's talents is a must-read for fans of classic supernatural literature. *(May)*

Annihilation Aria

Michael R. Underwood. Parvus, \$15.99 trade paper (400p) ISBN 978-1-7338119-5-8

In this entertaining space opera from Underwood (the Genrenauts series), a married couple—one an affable archaeologist from Earth who was accidentally transported across the universe with no way home, the other a warrior woman from a devastated alien culture who utilizes songs to enhance her combat skills—becomes embroiled in a mess of galactic proportions after they “liberate” a dangerous artifact from a long-lost temple. Now Max, Lahra, and their cybernetic pilot, Wheel, must learn the origins of the object to understand why the despotic Vsenk Imperium are so determined to claim it for themselves. Their quest takes them into the shattered remnants of a lost civilization, through a migrating stream of giant space turtles, and into the heart of a desperate rebellion. Alternating perspectives between the trio and their relentless Vsenk pursuer, this fantastically fun series launch harkens back to Marvel’s Guardians of the Galaxy (an influence Underwood cites in his acknowledgements). The interpersonal dynamics are delightful, however familiar they may be, and the tightly constructed world, cinematic fight scenes, and ambitious scope combine to evoke a sense of wonder. This is a rollicking good time. *Agent: Kim-Mei Kirtland, Howard Morhaim Literary Agency. (May)*

Romance/Erotica**Puppy Kisses**

Lucy Gilmore. Sourcebooks Casablanca, \$7.99 mass market (384p) ISBN 978-1-4926-7171-8

The effervescent third romance in Gilmore’s Forever Home series (after *Puppy Christmas*) pairs a reserved blind rancher with a happy-go-lucky sighted dog trainer. Dawn Vasquez has a reputation for being flighty and flirtatious, but after witnessing her sisters, with whom she owns a service-dog training business, settle down, she longs for a happy ever after of her own. After liberating a puppy from an abusive owner with her friend Zeke Dearborn, Dawn lies her way out of trouble with the law by claiming the

puppy is Zeke’s brother Adam’s new guide dog. Adam, the blind rancher, and Dawn have been hooking up since they first met, but beyond the hot sex and their love of riling each other up, they’re both unsure of where they stand. To get back at Dawn for using him as an excuse, Adam claims he really does want to keep the puppy as a service dog though he has no trouble getting around his sprawling ranch on his own. Sparring over the pup’s ownership leads Adam to fall hard for the dog—and realize he’s in love with Dawn. But he’s afraid she’ll never commit to a monogamous relationship. Gilmore’s peppy prose and skillful scene-setting unite into an unputdownable tale. This sensitive contemporary is a tail-wagging treat. *Agent: Courtney Miller-Callihan, Handspun Literary. (July)*

Dream Maker

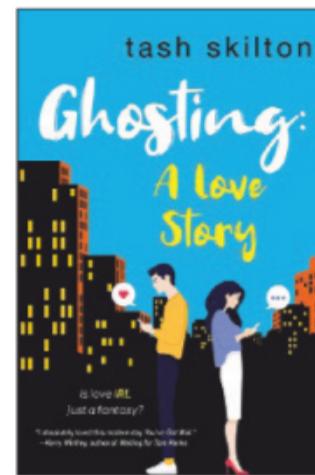
Kristen Ashley. Forever, \$7.99 mass market (544p) ISBN 978-1-5387-3386-8

The excellent first romance in Ashley’s Dream Team series features the alpha heroes and high-octane suspense her fans expect but balances the testosterone and adrenaline with moments of cozy domesticity. Mechanical genius Evie Gardiner is taking the long route to an engineering degree and works two jobs (providing tech support during the day and stripping at night) in Denver so she can continue to bail out her irresponsible family whenever they get into trouble. Evie agrees to a blind date with Daniel “Mag” Magnussen, a former U.S. Marine, and is instantly flustered by his good looks and charm, but their date is interrupted when Evie’s brother, Mick, needs her help. When Mick’s shady dealings make Evie a target for Denver’s most dangerous criminals, Mag commits to keeping her safe. While the subsequent action sequences—including kidnappings and shoot-outs—drive the story, Mag and Evie also spend a lot of time at home, cooking, kissing, and making plans for when their lives calm down. Familiar faces from Ashley’s Rock Chick series will please long-standing fans, and new readers will quickly grasp the established dynamics. Those who like a dash of sweetness in their suspense will be delighted. *(June)*

Ghosting: A Love Story

Tash Skilton. Kensington, \$15.95 trade paper (341p) ISBN 978-1-4967-3065-7

Skilton, the pseudonym of collaborators Sarvenaz Tash (*Virtually Yours*) and Sarah Skilton (*Fame Adjacent*), puts a multicultural millennial spin on *You’ve Got Mail* in this laugh-out-loud romance. Recently heartbroken Miles Ibrahim and broke L.A.



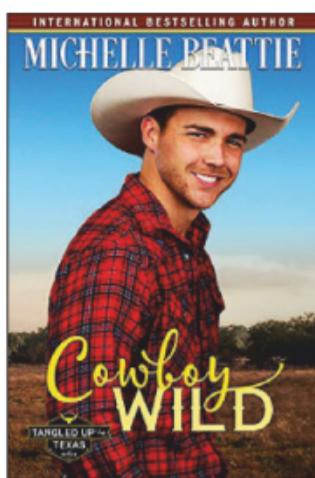
transplant Zoey Abot meet-cute while fighting for the best table at the East Village café from which they both happen to be freelancing as ghostwriters for rival online dating compa-

nies, sending flirtatious messages on behalf of app-shy clients. Their clients match, but it’s Miles and Zoey who fall in love, even as they both believe their connection is with the other’s client. Unaware of each other’s online alter egos, they also grow closer IRL. But what starts as a clever take on ’90s romantic comedy tropes falls into the trap of the inevitable third-act miscommunication, resulting in a frustrating conclusion to an otherwise enjoyable romance. Still, Skilton delivers solid laughs—Zoey’s former boss, a Carrie Fisher-esque actor, and her emotional support ferret especially steal the show—and a cute central couple. Rom-com fans will find this one well worth their time. *Agent: Victoria Marini, Irene Goodman Literary. (June)*

Cowboy Wild

Michelle Beattie. Tule, \$3.99 e-book (302p) ISBN 978-1-951786-62-5

Beattie’s electric third *Tangled Up in Texas* romance (after *Cowboy True*) matches a runaway bride with a playboy cowboy. Kara Montgomery, a sophisticated Austin, Tex., accountant, leaves the fiancé she isn’t sure she loves at the altar and heads to the rodeo, stashing her dress in a horse trailer and taking her mind off her troubles with a burger and a beer. When Cam Granger, a gorgeous but cocky horse trainer and rodeo star, stumbles on Kara retrieving her dress from his trailer, he’s instantly taken with the runaway bride



and invites Kara to plan her next steps from his family's scenic working ranch, the Diamond G. Cam's expecting just another short-term, no-strings-attached lust fest—but surprises himself

by developing feelings. For her part, Kara falls first for the wide-open spaces of Texas Hill Country, then for Cam. But when reality comes knocking in the form of Kara's controlling parents and justifiably bitter fiancé, the fledgling relationship might not survive. The chemistry between the leads is irresistible, with both hero and heroine having surprising depths, and Kara's overbearing parents are well shaded, making for formidable obstacles to her happiness. This hot romance is sure to melt hearts. (June)

Last Tang Standing

Lauren Ho. Putnam, \$16 trade paper (416p) ISBN 978-0-593-18781-4

Ho's witty, slow-burning debut opens on the holiday dreaded by Southeast Asian singles across the world—Chinese New Year. After Andrea Tang, the last single woman in her family, is forced to face the “Why Are You Still Single in Your Thirties, You Disappointment to Your Ancestors” inquisition, she leaves the family gathering more determined than ever to become a partner at her Singapore law firm and somehow find a man who will meet her family's expectations. In humorous diary entries, Andrea details her awkward dating app encounters and near-constant hangovers. Before long, she's caught between two potential suitors: Eric Deng, a handsome entrepreneur her family is sure to approve of, and her work rival, Suresh Aditparan, who she can't seem to get out of her head even though her family would not approve because he's not Chinese. Though Andrea's obliviousness to her own and others' emotions becomes increasingly frustrating as she struggles to choose between her head and her heart, this fun, upbeat tale remains entertaining throughout. Ho's cute,

quippy love story is sure to captivate rom-com fans. *Agent: Allison Hunter, Janklow & Nesbit Assoc. (June)*

When You Wish upon a Rogue

Anna Bennett. St. Martin's, \$7.99 mass market (336p) ISBN 978-1-250-19950-8

A woman's dream of marrying for love dies beneath her father's debt in the sparkling finale of Bennett's Debutante Diaries Regency series (after *The Duke Is But a Dream*). A marriage of convenience is an ironic fate to befall Sophie Kendall, the chairperson of Debutante's Underground, a secret society that encourages women to advocate for themselves. But Sophie makes a match with the wealthy Lord Singleton to save her family from destitution. Sleep evades Henry Reese, Earl of Warshire, until he happens upon Sophie breaking in to his vacant London storefront. Sophie instantly recognizes the signs of insomnia and insists on brewing him an herbal remedy—but it's her calming presence that lulls Reese off to dreamland. Astounded, Reese offers a deal: Sophie may use his building to hold Debutante Underground meetings in exchange for spending one night a week with him to help him rest. Sophie agrees and imposes a “no touching” rule. But their weekly visits soon give way to long talks and, as they fall in love, creative, sensual work-arounds to the rule. Sophie's sweetness and compassion shine and series fans will be thrilled to witness her turn in the spotlight. This silky-smooth series ender expertly tugs at the heartstrings. *Agent: Helen Breitwieser, Cornerstone Literary. (June)*

A Cowboy State of Mind

Jennie Marts. Sourcebooks Casablanca, \$7.99 mass market (416p) ISBN 978-1-4926-8911-9

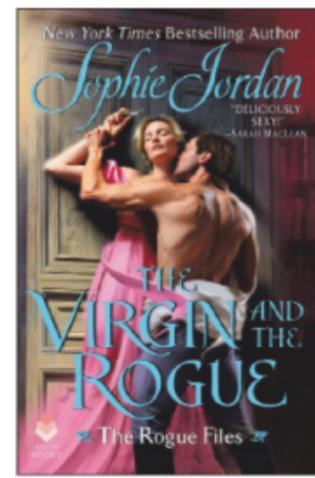
Marts (*Wish upon a Cowboy*) delights with this tale of romance and recovery, the first in her Creedence Horse Rescue series. Zane Taylor returns to Creedence, Colo., to work on his family ranch as his alcoholic father recovers from a heart attack. When he spots Bryn Callahan, the diner waitress he's sweet for, and her broken-down car on the side of the road, he gives her a ride back to town, sparking a friendship. The attraction between them intensifies when he comes to her aide again, helping her to transport a badly abused horse to her farm. Bryn gets hooked on rescuing animals,

taking in more horses, a pig, and a group of puppies until she's running a full-fledged rescue farm. Animal whisperer Zane agrees to help Bryn with the farm, becoming ever more drawn to her the more time they spend together. But Zane carries physical and emotional scars left by his abusive father and believes that he'll never be good enough for Bryn. Marts's fast-paced narrative and flawed but sympathetic hero make for a magnetic romance grounded in small town charm and psychological complexity. This sweet western romance spells good things for the series ahead. *Agent: Nicole Resciniti, the Seymour Agency. (June)*

The Virgin and the Rogue

Sophie Jordan. Avon, \$7.99 mass market (368p) ISBN 978-0-06-288544-9

A powerful aphrodisiac drives the smoldering sixth Regency in Jordan's Rogue Files series (after *The Duke's Stolen Bride*). Charlotte Langley's romance with her childhood friend William Pembroke had a hiccup when she and her sisters, Marian and Nora, briefly lost everything after the death of their father, but now that Marian is married to the wealthy Duke of Warrington, Charlotte and William's



engagement is back on. Their relationship is comfortable, chaste, and boring. Enter Kingston, illegitimate stepbrother to the duke and a known rogue. His visit to his

stepbrother's estate happens to coincide with Nora, an herbalist, accidentally mixing Charlotte a cordial that makes her overcome with lust. Their steamy first encounter escalates into a torrid affair as the effects of the love potion linger. What little plot breaks up the sex scenes follows a predictable formula, but Charlotte and Kingston's chemistry and the welcome humor Jordan weaves throughout will keep readers turning the pages. This erotically charged historical romance packs a passionate punch. *Agent: Maura E. Kye-Casella, Don Congdon Assoc. (May)*

Call It Magic

Janet Chapman. Berkley, \$7.99 mass market (352p) ISBN 978-0-515-15520-4

The late Chapman (1951–2017) weaves a tangled web of magic and mystery in her sweet but overstuffed seventh Spellbound Falls fantasy romance (after *The Highlander Next Door*). Katy MacBain's new job as a paramedic for Spellbound Falls Fire and Rescue in Maine sends her to Colorado for training, after which she disappears. Worried, Katy's best friend entreats Gunnar Wolfe, Spellbound Falls's interim fire chief, to find her. But he searches to no avail and the two don't meet until a clearly traumatized Katy reappears in Maine and reports for duty at the fire house, refusing to talk about what happened. Sparks fly between Katy and Gunnar from the jump, but he is determined to find out what happened to Katy in Colorado. His curiosity only grows when he witnesses her miraculously heal a cat that he's sure was dead. The mystery of Katy's disappearance provides a dark, emotional through line, but new readers will struggle to make sense of the extensive backstory required to piece together the plot. Though fans will appreciate the many familiar faces, the inclusion of so many nostalgic callbacks to earlier installments detracts from the central romance. This charming return to Spellbound Falls will primarily appeal to steadfast Chapman fans. Agent: Grace Morgan, Grace Morgan Agency. (May)

A Royal Kiss & Tell

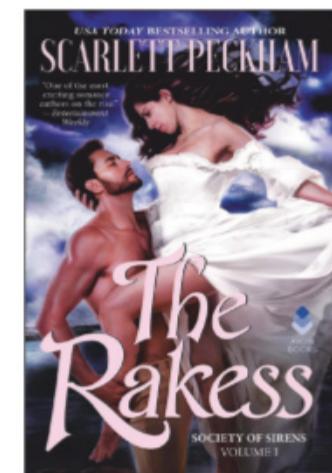
Julia London. HQN, \$9.99 mass market (384p) ISBN 978-1-335-13697-8

A petulant social butterfly and an arrogant prince take too long to warm up to one another in the slow-moving second Victorian era romance in London's Royal Wedding series (after *The Princess Plan*). English Lady Caroline Hawke's dearest friend, Eliza Tricklebank, is marrying Sebastian Chartier, Crown Prince of Alucia, and the wedding celebrations force Caroline and Sebastian's brother, Prince Leopold, into constant proximity. The pair instantly butt heads over societal rules. Leo has never met anyone more oblivious than the impudent beauty and wants nothing to do with her, while Caroline is offended that the handsome but uptight prince is immune

★ The Rakess

Scarlett Peckham. Avon, \$7.99 mass market (400p) ISBN 978-0-06-293561-8

A woman more committed to her ideals than to any of her casual lovers feels her heart begin to thaw in the sexy, tumultuous Regency romance that launches Peckham's Society of Sirens trilogy. The hedonistic Seraphina Arden is one of a trio of women who capitalize on their notorious reputations to promote gender equality. Upon returning to her childhood home to complete work on her scandalous memoir, Seraphina meets handsome, widowed architect Adam Anderson and wastes little time in propositioning him. Adam initially refuses her offer of a purely physical affair, focused on winning an influential client and securing his children's futures, but he's drawn to Seraphina and eventually succumbs to her brazen charms. Adam's struggle to keep his feelings separate from their relationship and Seraphina's difficulty accepting Adam's kindness form the heart of the story. Seraphina's reluctance to let anyone in stems from her painful past, and her eventual reckoning with her trauma propels this romance into heavy emotional territory. The open, exploratory love scenes sizzle with passion balanced by frank conversations about contraception and the risks of pregnancy. Peckham (*The Lord I Left*) never shies away from the bleak realities facing women of the era while capably making 19th-century sexual politics feel relevant to today. This rewarding love story is fierce, feminist, and full of feeling. Agent: Sarah Younger, Nancy Yost Literary. (May)



to her charms. Their paths continue to cross once they both return to London, as Leo moves through society circles investigating a rumor about a human trafficking ring and Caroline feeds nasty gossip about Leo to the papers. But with increased contact, they learn to see past each other's shallow surfaces, especially when Leo reveals his mission and Caroline agrees to help liberate the human traffickers' victims. Though the finale is thrilling and the late love scenes smolder with passion, it's a slog to get to the meat of the story. The sluggish start will turn off all but London's most devoted fans. Agent: Jenny Bent, the Bent Agency. (May)

To Dance in the Glen

Michelle Deerwester-Dalrymple. Michelle Deerwester-Dalrymple, \$12.99 trade paperback (278p) ISBN 978-0-359-05246-2

Deerwester-Dalrymple debuts with a pleasant, if conventional, tale of love and war in 14th-century Scotland, the first in her Glen Highland Romance series. When Meg Lachlan, a poor but courageous crofter's daughter, is harassed by a gang of

marauding Englishmen, she's grateful to be rescued by several young Scotsmen. Then she learns that one of her rescuers is Ewan MacLeod, son of the local laird. Meg knows Ewan's reputation for seduction and makes it clear she intends to maintain her virtue. But Ewan, whose mother was raped and murdered by the English, feels responsible for Meg's safety and, despite their differing social ranks, soon falls in love. Unbeknownst to both of them, the English are blackmailing Meg's father for the coastal access afforded by the MacLeods' otherwise modest lands. Ewan and Meg marry, throwing Meg into grave danger as the English view her as a useful tool to manipulate the MacLeods. When Meg is inevitably kidnapped, Ewan must save his new wife and, in the process, avenge his mother. Though the plot is pedestrian and the language often anachronistic ("Can't ye shut up and let me think?"), Meg and Ewan make an appealing couple. Fans of May McGoldrick and Amanda Scott will enjoy this entertaining Highland romance. (Self-published)

Comics

★ Child Star

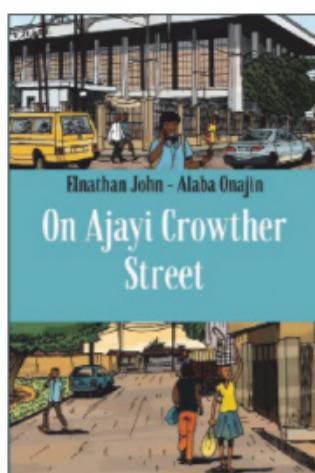
Brian "Box" Brown. First Second, \$19.99 trade paper (240p) ISBN 978-1-250-15407-1

Brown (*André the Giant*) made a reputation for offbeat and accessible graphic nonfiction, but in this savvy graphic satire, he shows an equally sure hand at fiction. The tragicomic narrative follows Owen Eugene, a 1980s child star who may remind readers of real-life actors Gary Coleman and Ricky Schroder. Appearing younger than his age due to a congenital disorder, Eugene becomes a sitcom superstar playing a kid with a sassy catchphrase, and his life goes downhill from there—from having his face plastered on lunch boxes to struggling to land ironic TV cameos, and separating from his exploitative parents along the way. The book's mockumentary format pieces his saga together from the testimonies of supporting actors in his life: directors, costars, estranged family members, his pro-basketball-player buddy. But Eugene, who never gets to speak for himself except in media clips, remains an enigma. Brown works in such elements as Eugene's bizarre Saturday morning cartoon, his sitcom's slew of very special episodes, and his descent into desperation. The blocky art moves the narrative along at an enjoyable clip, and it's appropriate that Eugene, irresistible to TV-land fans, often looks lumpy and off-putting. This in-the-know skewering of celebrity and pop culture will entertain children of the '80s as well as their own children. (June)

On Ajayi Crowther Street

Elnathan John and Àlábá Ònájìn. Cassava Republic, \$24.95 (192p) ISBN 978-1-911115-90-8

At Reformed End-Time Ministries church, Reverend Akpoborie places his hands on a worshipper and in "da mighty name of Jesus" declares him healed from the sin of homosexuality. But hypocrisy runs deep in this biting satire written by John (*Becoming Nigerian*): the "healed" gay man is a hired actor, the scamming Reverend is himself full of demons, and his own children question their sexuality and relationships. In simple, jerky line-work, Ònájìn captures the daily lives of



families in modern Lagos, including splendid background details such as colorful billboards, opinionated aunties and their brilliant textiles, and Akpoborie's frustrated daughters' resplendent side-eyes. The flushed colors, interwoven family drama, and slice-of-life storytelling recall Marguerite Abouet and Clément Oubrerie's *Aya: Life in Yop City*. Here also, the Akpoborie family and their neighbors' intimate dramas of romance, religion, and reputation unfold amid a clamor of big social issues. Women discuss antigay legislation as they get their hair braided; a neighborhood meeting kicks off a debate over whether to speak in English, Yoruba, or Pidgin; a maid worries over where to sleep after her employer molests her. This wicked-funny tour of Nigerian life will be eye-opening for many American readers. (June)

★ Nori

Rumi Hara. Drawn & Quarterly, \$24.95 trade paper (228p) ISBN 978-1-77046-397-4

Kyoto-born, Brooklyn-based cartoonist Hara evokes the wonder of childhood, with equal parts precision and whimsy, in this meticulously observed debut. Noriko "Nori" Iwasaki, a rambunctious, imaginative little girl, spends her days in 1980s suburban Japan with her Grandmother while her parents are at work. She chases magical rabbits across her preschool's playfield, explores the neighborhood's ditches and shopping district, celebrates at festivals, plays with sassy local kids and the varied urban wildlife that hide around every shrub, and, in the book's longest sequence, vacations in Hawaii on a trip won at a fair. The world of adults hums away in the background, still healing from WWII; old-timers reminisce about wartime privations, and the Hawaii escapade is held up as "a symbol of peace and revival" by the neighborhood business association. But Hara always returns to Nori's private world, masterfully

immersing the reader in a small child's perception, cramming panels with Richard Scarry-like ramshackle houses and busy gardens, irresistible fantasy sequences, and details—an ice cream advertisement, fish swimming in a tidal pool—a preschooler would light on. Nori and her playmates are sketched in loose lines with pitch-perfect body language. These satisfying sunny adventures succeed at being specific to their time and place while tapping into a sense of collective young memory, leaving the reader lighter and nostalgic. (May)

Algériennes: The Forgotten Women of the Algerian Revolution

Swann Meralli and Deloupy, trans. from the French by Ivanka Hahnenberger. Penn State Univ., \$24.95 (120p) ISBN 978-0-2710-8623-1

Meralli and Deloupy offer a thought-provoking look into the dangers and risks women endured during the Algerian War of Independence and its aftermath. Beatrice, a French woman whose reticent father fought in the conflict, decides in the present day to dig up its buried history. She interviews Saïda, an Algerian immigrant who escaped the war-torn country when she was young, only to be confined in a French concentration camp. Now a grandmother, Saïda asks, "If you go to Algeria, could you bring back a picture of my house?" Beatrice takes on the quest. At the Martyr's Memorial in Algiers, she meets Djamila, who tells her, "You won't find the real Mujahidates here," relaying harrowing tales of serving in the resistance and her torture upon capture. Beatrice travels to the countryside seeking Saïda's home and encounters Bernadette, a French woman who refused to leave Algeria after the war, choosing neither "the suitcase nor the coffin." With dry-brush ink textures and sepia-toned colors, the handsome art portrays brutalities and moments of personal triumph. Each woman brings a distinct and humanizing perspective—though the frame of a white woman gaining enlightenment through encountering the pain of colonized women of color is hackneyed at best. This complicated examination of colonialism is well worth unpacking. (May)

Nonfiction

Inventory: A Memoir

Darran Anderson. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$27 (416p) ISBN 978-0-374-27758-1

Poverty, suicide, and Northern Ireland's sectarian bloodshed shadow this bleak coming-of-age saga as Anderson (*Imaginary Cities*) recalls growing up in the 1980s and '90s in a Catholic neighborhood in Derry, site of the 1972 Bloody Sunday massacre of 14 protesters by British soldiers. It's a tense, atmospheric study of life in a war zone: gunfire echoed at night, killing innocents; IRA and Loyalist paramilitaries targeted each other—and suspect civilians—with bombings and shootings; Anderson and his pals dodged army patrols (while the patrols dodged snipers), endured humiliations at checkpoints and faced vicious beatings if they strayed into the wrong street. He also recounts his equally conflicted family history, including his maternal grandfather's domestic violence, his father's boyhood in a squatter camp and stint in the IRA, and his relatives' propensity for drowning, sometimes intentionally, in the River Foyle, a murky, mysterious presence threading through his vivid cityscape of Derry. Anderson's evocative prose takes disasters in stride while measuring their toll with restrained lyricism. ("All the things they'd owned... were just smoldering ash and debris, charred imitations of what they had once been, in rooms with no roof, under a sky innocent in its ignorance," he writes of an anti-Catholic arson.) The result is a grim but engrossing frontline take on the Troubles. (Aug.)

In the Land of Good Living: A Journey to the Heart of Florida

Kent Russell. Knopf, \$26.95 (320p) ISBN 978-0-525-52138-9

In this enjoyable travel memoir, a long-departed son of the Sunshine State returns with two buddies to explore the nation's weirdest state. Self-described "incautious Kerouac wannabe" and back-tax-dodging Russell (*I Am Sorry to Have Raised a Timid Son*) hauled his friends Glenn, "an affable Ottawa," and Iraq War vet Noah ("We fit together and dangerously so") along on a poorly thought-out odyssey into the sweaty, swampy heart of Florida in the



© ROGER PAUL MILLS

In Saving the Last Rhinos, Grant Fowlds describes his conservation work in Africa, including helping save Thandi, shown above, after her horn was hacked off by poachers (reviewed on p. 60).

summer of 2016. Planning to shoot a documentary, the three instead rambled down highways and threw ironic bromides back and forth—related in biting screen-play-format interludes—while Russell “tried to think Bruce Chatwin-y thoughts.” They encountered the expected range of Florida Man types, including Trump-loving fishermen, a crazed Jesus performer with a “down-and-out Pete Sampras vibe,” and prison-tatted marijuana growers in the surreal ruins of a never-completed suburban scam development. Throughout, Russell mixes historical insight with heavily ironic state mottos (“Florida: No judge but one’s own”) and a dash of empathy. As the trio amble south toward Miami and the author’s childhood home, he reflects on the state’s blithely corrupt history: “There are no innocents here. Only individuals who wanted waterfront property for pennies on the dollar.” At once insightful and entertaining, Russell’s observations reinforce Florida’s mystique. (July)

Notes on a Silencing: A Memoir

Lacy Crawford. Little, Brown, \$28 (400p) ISBN 978-0-316-49155-6

In this devastating memoir, Crawford (*Early Decision*) writes about being raped at age 15 by two 18-year-old male students at her elite New Hampshire boarding school and the attempt by school officials to cover it up. In 1990,

Crawford was lured after curfew to a dorm room at St. Paul’s School, where two students took turns forcing their penises into her mouth. With measured prose, Crawford talks about the physical and emotional trauma she suffered, and about getting harassed by her assailants’ friends in the days after the attack. When she finally told her mother what happened months later, school officials tried to shame and silence her: one administrator accused her of being promiscuous, and her college prospects were threatened. Crawford carefully exposes the rotten underbelly of the school, whose administrators never reported her assault to police and who, she learned after the school was investigated in 2018, had been orchestrating cover-ups of sexual violence and abuse for decades. “The slur slut carries within it, Trojan-horse style, silence as its true intent,” she writes, eventually realizing that “the opposite of slut is not virtue but voice.” Crawford’s is a stirring memoir of sexual assault and its aftermath. (July)

★ How to Die in Space: A Journey Through Dangerous Astrophysical Phenomena

Paul M. Sutter. Pegasus, \$27.95 (368p) ISBN 978-1-64313-438-3

“You’re not going to make it in space.... Space is nasty,” writes SUNY Stonybrook

attack; Engelhart became a prisoner of war. Finch, meanwhile, found work with a Japanese-controlled fuel company and joined an underground network smuggling supplies to Allied prisoners. In 1944, she was arrested and sentenced to three years of hard labor. In early February 1945, American soldiers liberated her prison. Mrazek chronicles Engelhart's treatment in various POW camps to highlight the importance of smuggling efforts, and interweaves a broad overview of the war in the Philippines with an action-packed recap of Finch's exploits, providing drama but little emotional insight. WWII buffs will relish this inside look at life under Japanese occupation; general readers will wish they got to know the heroine of the title better. (June)

Levon: From Down in the Delta to the Birth of The Band and Beyond

Sandra B. Tooze. Diversion, \$28.99 (384p)
ISBN 978-1-63576-704-9

Tooze (*Muddy Waters*) keeps a steady beat in this straightforward chronicle of the life of Band musician Levon Helm (1940–2012). Drawing on interviews with Helms's daughter, Amy Helm, close friends, and his music director Larry Campbell, Tooze traces Helm's life from his Arkansas childhood where he grew up listening to soul, country, blues, and gospel on the radio. By the time he was 15, he was playing drums in the Hawks; guitarist Robbie Robertson, bassist Rick Danko, and pianist Richard Manuel joined the band, and in 1964 the four musicians left to form their own group. They moved to Woodstock, N.Y.—in the famous pink house of their first album's title, *Music from Big Pink*—and added multi-instrumentalist Garth Hudson to the band. Tooze methodically traces the rapid rise to fame of the Band through perceptive and judicious summaries of each of the group's albums. By 1976, the group had disbanded, and Helm, after being treated for throat cancer, eventually built a barn on his Woodstock property where he would host and record his famous Midnight Ramble sessions—"a musical and communal gathering [attendees] wouldn't forget." Tooze's well-paced history serves as a solid companion to Helm's memoir *This Wheel's on Fire*. (June)

Lost Companions: Reflections on the Death of Pets

Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson. St. Martin's, \$27.99 (256p) ISBN 978-1-250-20223-9

Masson (*The Secret World of Farm Animals*) discusses people's close relationships with their pets through the lens of mortality in this moving and intimate study. Now 79, Masson reflects on a lifetime of pets, including his current one, yellow Labrador Benji, who at 13 is already a year beyond the breed's average life expectancy, a realization Masson finds "unbearable." He also elicits stories from friends, which are moving and occasionally heartbreak, dealing with cats and dogs, as well as less traditional pets, including turkeys and wombats. "Grief is grief," Masson writes, and though he's decidedly "not a great fan of psychology," he covers the stages of grief. Masson also tracks how humans' relationships with animals have changed over time (a "coevolution," he terms it) and suggests that dogs have "developed something unique in their ability to intuit our emotional states and to show empathy." Anyone who's found it difficult to deal with the fact that pets' "lives are so much shorter" than humans' will appreciate this compassionate work. (June)

Night of the Assassins: The Untold Story of Hitler's Plot to Kill FDR, Churchill, and Stalin

Howard Blum. Harper, \$29.99 (384p) ISBN 978-0-06-287289-0

Edgar Award-winner Blum (*In the Enemy's House*) delivers a digressive rundown of Operation Long Jump, the Nazi plot to assassinate Allied leaders Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin at the Tehran Conference in November 1943. After sketching previous assassination attempts (including the downing of a British civilian airplane falsely believed to be carrying Winston Churchill), Blum unravels the Tehran plot as a cat-and-mouse game between Mike Reilly, the U.S. Secret Service agent in charge of protecting Roosevelt, and Nazi foreign intelligence officer Walter Schellenberg, who planned for a team of 50 commandos to sneak into the British embassy through underground water tunnels and launch a grenade attack on Churchill's birthday. Unbeknownst to Schellenberg, however, the Soviets had gotten wind of the mission from a double agent. Most of the commandos were killed

or captured as they parachuted into Iran, but six remained at large, intending to make a last-ditch attack, until they were betrayed by coconspirators and blew themselves up as the Soviets and Reilly closed in. Blum pads the mission's details—taken from both Soviet and Western sources—with extensive background information on Nazi spy networks, Allied diplomatic negotiations, and WWII in Iran, slowing the pace considerably but providing plenty of intriguing diversions. Espionage fans will savor this wide-ranging, novelistic account. (June)

The Night the Referee Hit Back: Memorable Moments from the World of Boxing

Mike Silver. Rowman & Littlefield, \$34 (240p)
ISBN 978-1-5381-3690-4

In this fast-paced, enjoyable collection of essays, boxing historian Silver (*The Art of Boxing*) gathers the best of his articles covering four decades of professional boxing. Silver believes boxing today is "a fringe sport vastly inferior as an art form" compared to old school fights, and begins with an informative foreword by Mike Tyson trainer Teddy Atlas, who writes, "the boxing ring has been referred to as a chamber of truth." Readers will delight in Silver's recaps of such famous bouts as the 1975 Ali-Joe Frazier classic, the "Thrilla in Manila"; the 1962 Emile Griffith bout with Benny "Kid" Paret, who was knocked unconscious and died 10 days later; and the final encounter between Sugar Ray Robinson and Jake LaMotta ("For two minutes straight [LaMotta] was subjected to a horrific beating yet he still refused to go down"). Along the way, Silver covers President Teddy Roosevelt's early boxing days, as well as the championship bouts of Floyd Mayweather, and includes interviews with such greats as Archie Moore, Emile Griffith, and Carlos Ortiz. Loaded with information and anecdotes, this will be a welcome addition to the libraries of boxing fans and sports pundits. (June)

Without Ever Reaching the Summit: A Journey

Paolo Cognetti, trans. from the Italian by Stash Luczkiw. HarperOne, \$22.99 (160p)
ISBN 978-0-06-297831-8

Cognetti (*The Eight Mountains*) presents a delightful travelogue of his transformative

visit to the Dolpo region of Nepal. To celebrate his 40th birthday, Cognetti leaves his home in the Italian Alps and joins, with a couple friends, a group of about 20 others on a monthlong hike through Nepal. Inspired by the trek Peter Matthiessen chronicled in *The Snow Leopard*, Cognetti sees his expedition as a pilgrimage in which the purpose is not to reach a summit or a temple, but to travel and feel welcomed by the landscape rather than challenged by it. While suffering from altitude sickness, Cognetti navigates the frothy Suli Gad river, glacier capped mountains, ancient monasteries, a herd of blue Himalayan sheep, and tracks left by the elusive snow leopard. Along the way, he embraces the Buddhist mantra *om mani padme hum* (*om*, the jewel in the lotus), adopts a little black dog, and (through contemplation of the snow leopard) comes to respect the “unseen and untouched” presence of the mountain. Luczkiw’s lush translation captures Cognetti’s impassioned descriptions of the mountains, fauna, and the many

gracious people he encountered along the trail. Armchair travelers with a spiritual bent will be riveted by Cognetti’s reflections. (June)

Big Wild Love: The Unstoppable Power of Letting Go

Jill Sherer Murray. She Writes, \$16.95 trade paper (256p) ISBN 978-1-63152-852-1

Journalist and life coach Murray’s excellent debut provides women a road map for personal growth, development, and pursuit of romantic love. Murray believes the foundations of growth are self-love and managing one’s “vicious” inner voice. “Change your limiting beliefs, change everything,” she counsels, and notes that it’s impossible to attract or enjoy romantic love without first loving oneself. Her method of “big wild love” requires a deliberate, intentional approach to taking care of oneself, and understanding that at everyone’s core is a set of beliefs that can both define and derail one’s pursuit of love. She explains how engaging in self-exploration and uncovering

beliefs (conscious and unconscious) about love can lead to happily ever after, explaining that feeling “deserved to be loved” is the key to finding the right partner. She also provides helpful questionnaires and advice for responding to relationship disharmony (such as the “Two Day Relationship Detox” plan). With an empathetic tone, Murray demonstrates that the best way of dealing with uncertainty is simply to own it. Her empowering guide will be ideal for fans of Julia Cameron’s *The Artist’s Way*. (May)

★ Brown Album: Essays on Exile and Identity

Porochista Khakpour. Vintage, \$16 trade paper (304p) ISBN 978-0-525-56471-3

In this wonderful essay collection, novelist Khakpour (*The Last Illusion*) passionately and wittily explores the writing life and the Iranian-American experience. Not surprisingly, political concerns abound; Khakpour recalls, early in the Trump presidency, hearing of deportations in her majority-Muslim apartment building and encountering rumors that naturalized citizens such as herself—her family left Iran soon after the revolution—would be targeted. She threads memoir throughout, touching on her family life and on her years as “the only Iranian not only in my grade but in the whole elementary school, middle school, and high school.” In recounting the writing of her first novel, *Sons and Other Flammable Objects*, Khakpour offers a revealing set of reflections on the travails and joys of being a writer, as she finishes the manuscript and submits it to her publisher, hits assorted prepublication snags, and embarks on the reading and book festival circuit. She also shares the pitfalls of being known as an Iranian-American writer, or, due to her novel’s themes, a “9/11 author.” Lovers of the essay and those interested in immigrant literature will be particularly delighted, but any reader can enjoy Khakpour’s passionate and enlightening work. (May)

The BS Dictionary: Uncovering the Origins and True Meanings of Business Speak

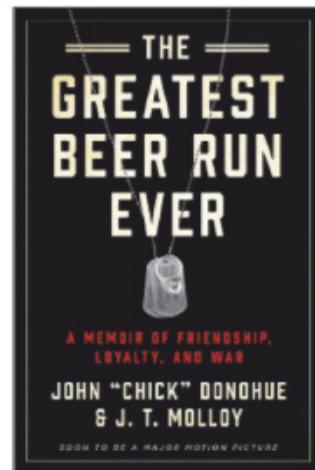
Bob Wiltfong and Tim Ito. ATD, \$19.99 trade paper (340p) ISBN 978-1-950496-16-7

Anyone baffled by buzzwords or dubious

★ The Greatest Beer Run Ever Made: A Memoir of Friendship, Loyalty, and War

John Donohue and J. T. Molloy. Morrow, \$27.99 (256p)
ISBN 978-0-06-299548-3

In this energetic debut memoir, former Marine Donohue recalls an “insane” idea hatched in a New York City bar in 1967 that led him into the war in Vietnam. As a reaction to antiwar protests, a friend suggested that, to show troops some support, “somebody ought to go over to ‘Nam, track down our boys from the neighborhood, and bring them each a beer!” Donohue, writing with *New York Daily News* columnist Molloy, was the logical choice to be that “somebody,” since, as a civilian seaman in the U.S. Merchant Marine, he possessed a military “Z” card, which allowed him to travel to the country. After a monthlong trip across the Pacific on a freight ship, Donohue managed—with the help of U.S. soldiers willing to break some rules—to actually find some of his friends, including the brother of a grade school friend, whom he links up with just after his ship drops anchor off Qui Nhon; another friend he locates nearly 100 miles away, after managing to get two flights and a helicopter ride from helpful GIs. But the heart of the book is when he finds himself alone in Saigon during the Tet offensive; as he witnesses the storming of the U.S. embassy, he recognizes the false bravado behind his mission and, after arriving home, realizes the antiwar protesters “were at least trying to stop this madness.” Donohue’s memoir is a fascinating, vividly narrated recollection of the chaos of the Vietnam War. (May)



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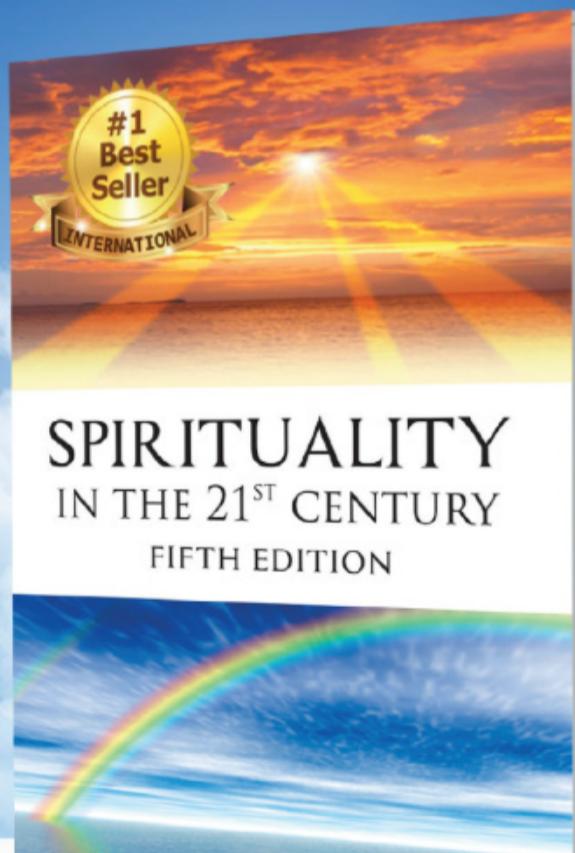
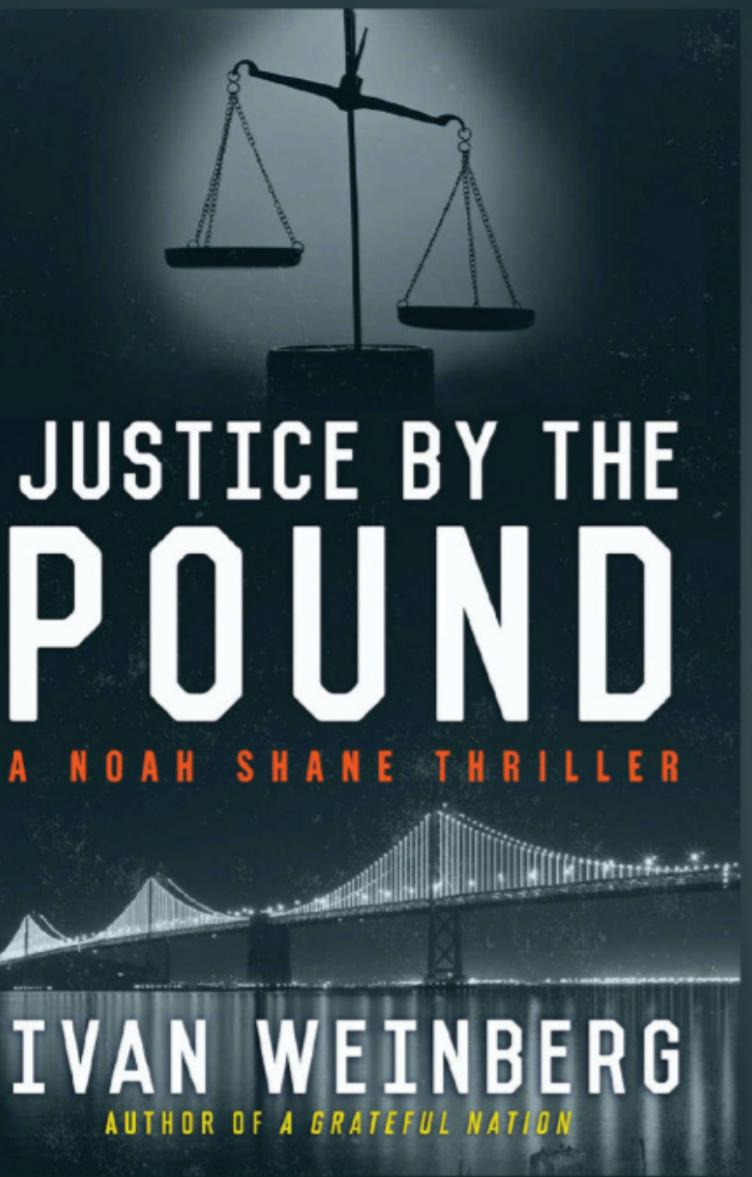
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about deliverables will find amusement, though perhaps not hilarity, in PR expert Wiltfong and marketing v-p Ito's look at corporate nonsense-speak. Each word or phrase is given a standard dictionary-style definition, a sardonic "BS" definition, and some background on etymology. The entries range from cranky (the BS definition of *actionable* is "literally nothing on the list of items that comes from the innovation team") to snarky (for *ghosting*, "what your boss does when you ask for a raise"). The definitions should raise a knowing giggle from anyone who's had to operationalize their paradigm shift when the boss has them over a barrel, but it's hard to imagine who, with Google at their disposal, would actually need this as a working dictionary. The authors acknowledge as much in the introduction, but scoff at the variable credibility of people writing on the internet, and in any case, aim more for amusement than instruction. This is a natural gift for a newly minted MBA, or as a passive-aggressive suggestion to that friend who won't shut up about having "laser focus," but the central conceit of this gimmicky humor offering gets old fairly fast. (May)

Dante's Bones: How a Poet Invented Italy

Guy P. Raffa. Harvard Univ., \$35 (370p)
ISBN 978-0-674-98083-9

Raffa (*The Complete Danteworlds*), a UT Austin Italian studies associate professor, devotes this fascinating study to how the treatment of Dante's remains over the centuries has reflected his centrality to Italian history and culture. Beginning with the long-running dispute between Florence, Dante's birthplace, and Ravenna, his burial site, over the poet's legacy, Raffa is meticulous in unearthing telling, and sometimes astonishing, details. These include how Franciscan monks broke into Dante's tomb in the 16th century to steal his skeleton, and how it was displayed in a glass coffin to huge crowds in 1865, in a commemoration of Dante's 600th birthday, which also reflected his symbolic importance for the newly formed Italian nation. No less fascinating is how Mussolini connected "Dante's virility and intellectual capacity," as supposedly deduced from his remains, to the Fascist Party's racial-supremacist agenda, and how, during WWII's later stages, the tomb's watchmen

protected it from both Nazi looters and Allied bombing raids. Italy's fascination with Dante continues up to the present: a final chapter discusses the University of Bologna's painstaking computer-generated 2006 reconstruction of what the poet's head may have looked like. In tracing the history of Dante's bones, Raffa also provides an illuminating exploration of Italian nationalism and political thought. (May)

Diary of a Foreigner in Paris

Curzio Malaparte, trans. from the Italian and French by Stephen Twilley. New York Review Books, \$17.95 trade paper (280p) ISBN 978-1-68137-416-1

This endlessly entertaining diary from Italian diplomat, journalist, and novelist Malaparte (1898–1957) of his time in Paris in 1947 and 1948 gives a unique vantage point onto post-WWII France. He records witty dinner conversations with acquaintances, notes verbal attacks he endures for having been an early Mussolini supporter (to which he responds by noting his eventual break with, and imprisonment by, the dictator), and issues his own extended observations on contemporary affairs. He also comments, often witheringly, on the celebrities he encounters, including Jean-Paul Sartre, whom he tags as standard-bearer for a "new, artificial bohemianism, which proposes to replace principles with slovenliness, ideas with a sweater," and recent Nobel Prize-winner André Gide, who exemplifies an "abstract, intellectual conception of man," which Malaparte holds responsible for the carnage of WWII. His writing soars when waxing lyrical, as captured by Twilley's beautiful translation, about Paris, where he observes how the "Seine's reflections gradually invade the sky, [turning] the Paris sky into a gray-blue lake." Coming across as a *My Dinner with Andre* in print, the book offers the pleasure of eavesdropping on an extended salon conversation among luminaries in the aftermath of a tumultuous era. (May)

★ Fairest: A Memoir

Meredith Talusan. Viking, \$27 (320p)
ISBN 978-0-525-56130-9

Talusan, a founding executive editor of *Them*, Condé Nast's LGBTQ online magazine, who was born as an albino boy in the Philippines, relays her "journey across gender" in an assured debut memoir

with a cinematic flair. Talusan discusses growing up as a blond-haired oddity with "weak eyes" in the Philippines in the 1970s and '80s, and of feeling shame for liking boys. She writes with distance about her "derelict" parents—father was absent, mother was a gambler—who in 1990 brought her to the U.S., where "white people thought I was white" and where it was "to my benefit to seem white too." Talusan attended Harvard, where she came out as gay and began exploring drag and her desire to transition. She addresses her sex life, including going to a bathhouse and hooking up with men through personal ads, and talks heartbreakingly of being in a relationship with someone who loved her as a man but not as a woman. Talusan had gender reassignment surgery in Thailand in 2002, but the narrative jumps over the procedure itself; rather, it's about the process of coming into one's own and of gaining "freedom of expression" through gender transition. This elegant memoir examining whiteness, womanhood, and the shaping of identity will resonate with readers of any community, LGBTQ or not. (May)

The Habsburgs: To Rule the World

Martyn Rady. Basic, \$32 (416p) ISBN 978-1-5416-4450-2

Rady (*The Habsburg Empire: A Very Short Introduction*), a history professor at University College London, delivers a granular yet accessible survey of the Habsburg Empire's central role in the transformation of Western civilization from the Middle Ages into the modern world. Documenting the political and social contexts behind the reigns of each Habsburg ruler, Rady traces the empire's rise from 13th-century Swabia (now southwestern Germany) to its 16th-century expansion into Spain and southern Italy and its 20th-century collapse. Milestone figures include Philip II of Spain (1527–1598), who controlled colonies in North and South America and Asia; Maria Theresa of Austria (1717–1780), who advanced Enlightenment ideals as she expanded government bureaucracy, mandated schooling for peasant children, and sent medical personnel to investigate rumors of vampirism across central Europe; and Archduke Franz Ferdinand (1863–1914), whose assassination by a Yugoslav nationalist sparked WWI. Rady notes

continued on p. 58

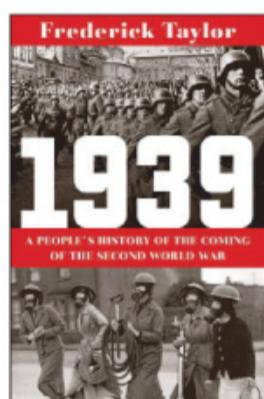
THE ROAD TO WAR

Three new books examine the origins of WWII.

1939: A People's History of the Coming of the Second World War

Frederick Taylor. Norton, \$30 (448p) ISBN 978-1-324-00679-4

British historian Taylor (*Coventry*) delivers an incisive survey of “the experience[s] of the people living day by day, week by week, through the chaotic and unpredictable time immediately preceding the outbreak of the Second World War.” Juxtaposing British and German perspectives, Taylor



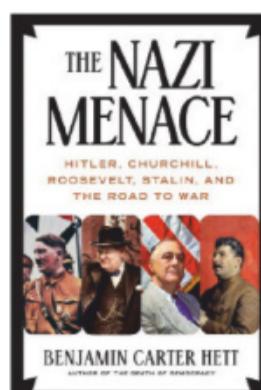
chronicles the year between the 1938 Munich Agreement and the 1939 invasion of Poland, drawing on personal diaries, published memoirs, newspaper accounts, and oral histories to examine how “the mass of the people” in both countries went from not wanting war to tolerating it with “grim determination.”

British prime minister Neville Chamberlain, Taylor shows, at first received “almost unanimous” praise from the press for his appeasement policy, but “hardly anyone” thought Hitler would stop with annexing the Sudeten territories of Czechoslovakia. Following Kristallnacht in November 1938, ordinary Britons saw the Nazi regime as “barbaric” and “guided by unhinged personalities,” but remained largely ambivalent about Jewish refugees. In Germany, meanwhile, propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels waged a yearlong disinformation campaign that convinced even some German Jews to support the invasion of Poland. Taylor’s research impresses, though the granularity of detail may daunt all but the most dedicated of readers, and a through line about German serial killer Johann Eichhorn seems out of place. This exhaustive deep-dive offers fresh insights into how WWII happened. (May)

The Nazi Menace: Hitler, Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, and the Road to War

Benjamin Carter Hett. Holt, \$29.99 (336p) ISBN 978-1-250-20523-0

In this crisp and well-researched account, Hunter College history professor Hett (*The Death of Democracy*) portrays the lead-up to WWII as a “crisis in democracy” during which Allied leaders struggled to articulate an “open and international” world vision in response to the rise of totalitarianism. Hett highlights how the redrawing of central and eastern Europe following WWI inflamed ethnic tensions, and argues that the Great Depression “accelerated the trend toward authoritarian politics” across the region. He documents domestic pressures, including organized labor’s anti-immigrant stance, that contributed to President Roosevelt’s initial downplaying of the plight of German Jews, and traces the growth of Winston Churchill’s commitment to democracy



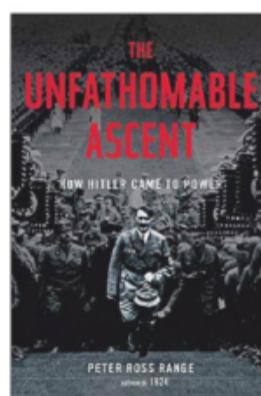
through the 1930s. Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union used new media technologies to weaponize propaganda, Hett explains, noting that Orson Welles’s *War of the Worlds* broadcast both revealed the power of radio to incite mass movements and influenced American and British efforts to sway public opinion in favor of confronting Hitler. Hett wisely introduces each

chapter with vivid sketches of historical figures, including R.J. Mitchell, designer of the Spitfire fighter plane, and American journalist Dorothy Thompson, humanizing his analysis of political and military developments. This history makes a solid contribution to the understanding of the driving forces behind WWII. (June)

The Unfathomable Ascent: How Hitler Came to Power

Peter Ross Range. Little, Brown, \$29 (464p) ISBN 978-0-316-43512-3

Journalist Range (1924) recounts Adolf Hitler’s rise to power from 1925 to 1933 in this rigorously detailed and dramatic account. After his imprisonment following the 1923 Beer Hall Putsch, Hitler reentered the unstable political arena of Weimar Germany and enlisted a cadre of dedicated loyalists to reestablish authority over the Nazi Party. He traveled tirelessly across the country, delivering his nationalistic, anti-Semitic message to growing audiences in carefully staged events, and charmed wealthy benefactors, while



remaining careful not to overplay his hand, as he’d done in 1923. When the Nazis won a plurality of the vote in a series of 1932 elections, establishment conservatives seeking to form a coalition government pressured president Paul von Hindenburg to appoint Hitler chancellor of Germany, a move they thought would tame his political ambitions with “governing responsibilities.”

But Hitler, with the help of Hermann Göring, Heinrich Himmler, and others, exploited the 1933 Reichstag fire to suspend civil liberties and assert total control of the government. Range’s lengthy and fine-grained descriptions of the clandestine meetings and palace intrigues during late 1932 and early 1933 may be daunting for general readers, but he writes with verve and expertly mines German sources for telling details about the major players involved. This exhaustive account will enlighten even dedicated readers of WWII history. Agent: Gail Ross, Ross Yoon Agency. (May)

continued from p. 56

how the Habsburgs' ability to consistently produce male heirs (their "genetic good fortune") facilitated territorial expansion, but succumbed to "successive intermarriages" that led to infertility and infant death, contributing to the downfall of the monarchy's Spanish branch. Packed with names, dates, and accounts of little-known wars, Rady's prose is more easily digested in standalone chapters than as a linear narrative. This comprehensive account provides an insightful overview of seven centuries of European history. (May)

The Hour of Fate: Theodore Roosevelt, J.P. Morgan, and the Battle to Transform American Capitalism

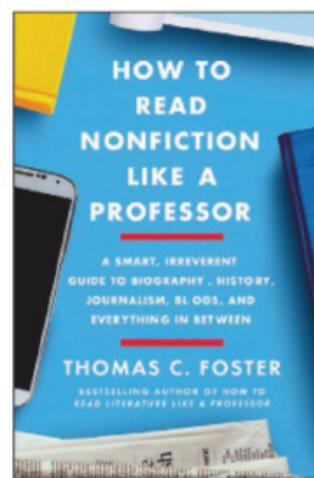
Susan Berfield. Bloomsbury, \$30 (400p)
ISBN 978-1-63557-249-0

Journalist Berfield debuts with a vivid account of the early 20th-century battle of wills between President Theodore Roosevelt and financier J.P. Morgan that led to the breakup of the Northern Securities railroad company. After highlighting the parallels between Morgan and Roosevelt's early lives (both were born into the upper class, both had childhoods marked by illness), and documenting their divergent political and economic beliefs (Roosevelt became a progressive trust-buster; Morgan believed capitalism should be "orderly and concentrated, directed from above by powerful men"), Berfield expands the story to include labor leader John Mitchell, a driving force behind the 1902 United Mine Workers strike, which threatened both the railroad industry and America's heating supply and led to the federal government's first intervention in a labor dispute. Weaving together the perspectives of labor, capital, and government, Berfield documents the origins of reforms including the eight-hour workday and worker's compensation; she finds drama in complex and potentially dry business transactions, and makes insightful comparisons to today's progressive movement. This entertaining account will resonate with American history buffs and those who agree with Berfield that "the battle to make American capitalism more fair rages just as furiously" today as it did at the turn of the last century. (May)

How to Read Nonfiction Like a Professor: A Smart, Irreverent Guide to Biography, History, Journalism, Blogs, and Everything in Between

Thomas C. Foster. Harper Perennial, \$17.99
trade paper (336p) ISBN 978-0-06-289581-8

Foster, a University of Michigan–Flint emeritus professor of English, proposes ways for readers to read "past the surface" of nonfiction texts in this approachable guide. It expands Foster's How to Read series (*How to Read Poetry Like a Professor*, etc.), with Foster observing early on that "nonfiction has just as many, and very likely more, genres than does fiction." Adopting a



conversational tone, he succinctly tackles everything from textbooks, history books, and biographies to journalism, op-eds, and "web-specific forms" such as blogs and social

media posts. From parsing the unique rules that "govern how information is offered to readers" to uncovering "where we think our bias lies," the book grounds its approach in relevant examples, including the proliferation of "fake news" in general, and, in particular, the Russian misinformation campaign during the 2016 presidential election. Perhaps most importantly, Foster writes, readers must learn "to ask questions of the article or book and its author." This zippy, pragmatic book will appeal to readers in search of guidance on separating fact from fiction in an age of information overload. *Agent: Faith Hamlin, Sanford J. Greenburger Assoc.* (May)

Kooks and Degenerates on Ice: Bobby Orr, the Big Bad Bruins, and the Stanley Cup Championship That Transformed Hockey

Thomas J. Whalen. Rowman & Littlefield, \$36
(224p) ISBN 978-1-5381-1028-7

Whalen (*When the Red Sox Ruled: Baseball's First Dynasty, 1912–1918*), a professor of social science at Boston University, thrillingly details the 1970 Stanley Cup championship season of the Boston Bruins. Whalen begins in 1967,

when the NHL, responding to a growing interest in U.S. hockey, doubled the number of teams from the "Original Six" across the continent, detailing how Boston—which in 1924 had the first non-Canadian franchise—remained the hub of American hockey. He highlights the team's colorful characters, whose on- and off-ice antics led one Bruins player to describe the team as "just a bunch of kooks and degenerates who get along": the young defenseman Bobby Orr, "a human highlight reel—a Michael Jordan on ice"; the scoring champion Phil Esposito; and the perennial brawler and "wildly unpredictable" clutch scorer Derek Sanderson. Whalen vividly takes readers through the arc of the winning season, from early season struggles to the eventual Stanley Cup victory over the St. Louis Blues with Orr's game-winning goal, captured in the famous flying Superman photo. This exciting slice of hockey history is an open-net goal for Bruins fans. (May)

The Lincoln Conspiracy: The Secret Plot to Kill America's 16th President—and Why It Failed

Brad Meltzer and Josh Mensch. Flatiron,
\$29.99 (448p) ISBN 978-1-250-31747-6

Meltzer and Mensch (*The First Conspiracy*) deliver a solid recounting of the conspiracy to assassinate president-elect Abraham Lincoln during his February 1861 railroad trip from Springfield, Ill., to Washington, D.C., and the successful efforts to foil it. Opening in dramatic fashion ("There's a secret on this train"), the authors describe how "America's first private detective," Allan Pinkerton, and two undercover agents—a man and a woman—snuck Lincoln, who was disguised as the woman's invalid brother and concealed in a sleeper berth, into Baltimore, Md., in the middle of the night, where he changed trains and immediately departed, thwarting "an underground network of secessionists" who expected him to arrive a day-and-a-half later. Flashbacks to Lincoln's presidential campaign illuminate the tensions between pro- and anti-slavery activists, and the authors briskly detail the backgrounds of conspirators Cypriano Ferrandini, Baltimore's "most powerful barber," and 28-year-old socialite Otis K. Hillard, as well as the efforts of Pinkerton Agency detectives to gather intelligence on

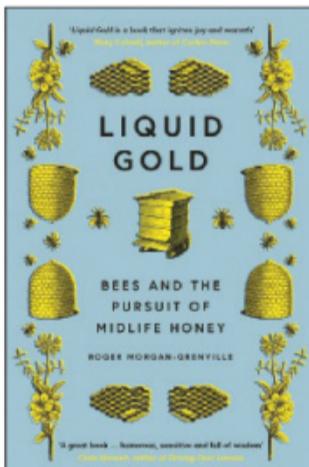
the white supremacist societies allegedly behind the plot. Meltzer and Mensch maintain suspense despite the known outcome of the story, and convincingly counter claims that Pinkerton made the whole thing up for publicity purposes. Readers new to the “Baltimore Plot” will appreciate this comprehensive and well-written overview. (May)

Liquid Gold: Bees and the Pursuit of Midlife Honey

Roger Morgan-Grenville. Icon, \$22.95 (272p) ISBN 978-1-78578-605-1

In a “how not to” narrative both humorous and emotionally affecting, Morgan-Grenville (*Unlimited Overs*), a British Army veteran and cofounder of the U.K. military charity Help for Heroes, recounts his midlife foray into honey making. Describing how he and a friend, Duncan, decided on a whim to begin keeping honey bees in England’s West Sussex countryside, Morgan-Grenville mines their frequent missteps for laughs. They immediately blow their agreed-upon budget while acquiring supplies at auction (a task requiring an “expert in the field with the self-control of a Trappist monk, not two ignorant and overenthusiastic novices”) and have to recapture an entire

runaway colony—with Duncan away in London, he asks his wife to help, which she agrees to do for £150. He also shares sad moments, as when his and Duncan’s inexperience leads to



the death of much of their hive, and they find themselves grieving for the insects with an emotion “perilously close to love.” For people hoping to also get into the honey game, Morgan-Grenville passes along hard-won wisdom, including how honey bee temperaments differ by region (the Northern European bee is “efficient and aggressive”; the Italian bee, “polite but idle”). Morgan-Grenville’s wry and thoughtful tale demonstrates why an item many take for granted should, in fact, be regarded as liquid gold. (May)

The Merit Myth: How Our Colleges Favor the Rich and Divide America

Anthony P. Carnevale, Peter Schmidt, and Jeff Strohl. New Press, \$27.99 (320p) ISBN 978-1-62097-486-5

In this detailed yet disappointing polemic, a trio of scholars from Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce indict elite U.S. colleges for reinforcing income inequality, limiting social mobility, and ensuring “stratification based on race and class.” According to the authors, top-ranked universities seek to “promote their respective interests” rather than “further the common good” through selective admissions policies that favor the children of alumni and donors, rely too much on standardized test scores (which reflect “socio-economic disparities” better than they predict academic performance), and award financial aid to students who don’t need it. Meanwhile, low-income students admitted to “less-selective” institutions receive subpar educations, suffer higher dropout rates, and wind up in “lower-paying rank-and-file” jobs. Though the authors’ indictment of the “market forces” driving stratification is valid, and their discussions of historical developments (including the implementation of the SAT as a screening tool) can be illuminating, their dismissal of the majority of American colleges as “underfunded dropout factories” grates—and reveals their own elitism. The book’s reform proposals, including the worthy idea to extend guaranteed public education from 12 to 14 years, are more conjectures than actionable plans. This well-intentioned critique misses the mark. (May)

My Life as a Villainess: Essays

Laura Lippman. HarperCollins, \$28.99 (288p) ISBN 978-0-06-299733-3

Self-awareness, a knack for observation, and a dose of snark fuel the uneven but occasionally potent debut collection from Edgar Award-winning crime novelist Lippman (*The Lady in the Lake*). As Lippman explains, “There is a sense of liberation in admitting to one’s faults” and in fact she “had to stretch to earn the title” of villainess. The essays sometimes feel as though they could have gone deeper into their subject, but nuggets of insight show up consistently enough to compensate, as when she comments, “Our culture long ago made

peace with the fragility of matrimony, but we still have high expectations for friendships.” Lippman is at her best when confronting society’s expectations of women, especially while discussing becoming a late-in-life mom. About menopause, she drily comments that it “doesn’t make women want to die. It makes other people wish we would die, or at least disappear.” Rightfully asking to be judged on her own terms, not on those of the women she cites as inevitable comparisons for a female essayist—Joan Didion, Nora Ephron, Susan Sontag—Lippman contributes an appealingly candid voice to the literary conversation. *Agent: Vicky Bijur, Vicky Bijur Literary.* (May)

The New One: Painfully True Stories from a Reluctant Dad

Mike Birbiglia, with poems by J. Hope Stein. Grand Central, \$28 (240p) ISBN 978-1-5387-0151-5

Comedian Birbiglia (*Sleepwalk with Me*) reflects on fatherhood in this fast-paced memoir, which also features his wife Stein’s brief, intimate poems. In 2016, 40-year-old Birbiglia was happily married and happily childless: “I’ve lost a lot of great friends to kids,” he notes. Then, Stein (*Little Astronaut*) tells him that she wanted to abandon their vow of childlessness; desperate to change her mind, he cites his dangerous sleepwalking disorder, high cholesterol, and a teenage bout with cancer as proof he’s “a walking pre-existing condition,” but his wife won him over. Stein develops complications during her pregnancy (she writes of her unborn daughter, “my body may fail you, / (sorry)”), while the expectant father engages in “sympathy eating.” (“I’m so sorry you’re having cramps—are you gonna finish those fries?” writes Birbiglia). In the months after daughter Oona’s birth, Birbiglia grows fearful that he may never connect with his “little monkey,” yet soon enough he wins small victories, like receiving “record-high approval ratings” from Oona for his rendition of “Ave Maria.” The turning point comes when he plays hide and seek with her in a furniture showroom, and she begins “laughing so hard that I start laughing in a new way.... We’re laughing as one.” Birbiglia’s witty take on new parenthood will resonate especially with those who’ve been there. (May)

Pelosi

Molly Ball. Holt, \$27.99 (368p) ISBN 978-1-250-25286-9

Time journalist Ball debuts with a lively and detailed portrait of California congresswoman Nancy Pelosi. Born into a Maryland political dynasty (her father was a congressman and mayor of Baltimore) in 1940, Pelosi raised five children with her husband, Paul, a California businessman, as she moved up the ranks of San Francisco's Democratic Party. Elected to Congress in 1987, she advocated for AIDS victims, prevented the Presidio from being sold to private developers, and advocated for human rights in China following the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. She also fought against the war in Iraq and, in her first stint as House speaker, helped President Obama pass the Affordable Care Act. Ball notes Pelosi's myriad milestones—the first daughter to follow her father into the House of Representatives, longest-serving member of the House Intelligence Committee, undefeated in

floor votes during her first term as speaker—and credits her with helping save the economy from disaster in 2008 and changing course to launch the 2019 impeachment

inquiry. Ball also notes Pelosi's struggles, including her tensions with progressive upstarts such as Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez and accusations that she galvanized Republican turnout in Jon Ossoff's loss in a 2017 special election for a congressional seat. Ball's accessible review of recent legislative history and behind-the-scenes coverage of congressional matters provide valuable insights for political junkies. Even readers who don't entirely agree with Pelosi's agenda will gain respect for her accomplishments and tenacity. (May)

A Philosophy of Simple Living

Jérôme Brillaud. Reaktion, \$20 (200p) ISBN 978-1-78914-227-3

In this insightful debut, Brillaud, professor of French at the University of Manchester, analyzes the "simple life" by

examining historical figures who "saw simplicity as a way of life." Among the exemplars of simplicity Brillaud surveys are antiestablishment spiritual pioneers such as the desert monks of early Christianity and the Shakers of the late 18th century, as well as philosophical giants including fourth-century BCE philosopher Diogenes the Cynic and American transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau. Each, Brillaud writes, sought to lessen the noise of a busy life in order to "remain attuned to the quiet activity of living which transpired in and around them." Ironically, in offering a diverse array of paragons and dissecting their choices—for example, when he opens the book with a deep dive into various stages of Greek philosophy, language, and history—Brillaud's study gets pretty complicated. While the academic nuance helps illustrate different approaches to the simple life, one is left wondering what the simple life really is; Brillaud admits it's "a concept with far-reaching resonance" and that it cannot be reduced to "static principles, lofty ambitions, or technological expedients." Those looking for advice on creating a "life governed by simple rules" will enjoy Brillaud's inviting portraits. (May)

The Presidents vs. the Press: The Endless Battle Between the White House and the Media—from the Founding Fathers to Fake News

Harold Holzer. Dutton, \$29 (464p) ISBN 978-1-5247-4526-4

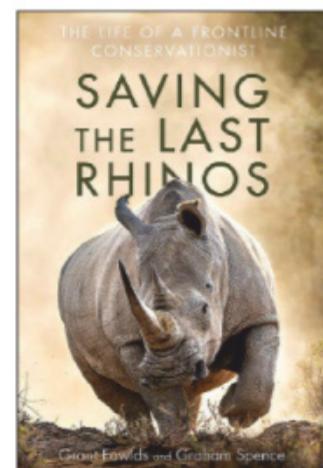
Historian Holzer (*Monument Man*) documents the tensions between U.S. presidents and the press in this colorful but overwhelming survey. Starting with George Washington and his fellow founding fathers John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, then skipping ahead to Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin Roosevelt, before concluding with a rundown of every modern president from Kennedy through Trump, Holzer aims to "alert readers to historical traditions, original principles, and ominous trends." He describes Washington's battles with the journalist grandson of Benjamin Franklin; cites examples of FDR's "manipulative charm" during press briefings, including the time he told a reporter inquiring about a potential third term to "put on your dunce cap and stand with your back to the crowd"; and notes

Obama's controversial use of the 1917 Espionage Act to jail reporters' sources and stem the tide of intelligence community leaks. Evidence of Trump's love-hate relationship with the press includes extensive TV coverage of his 2016 campaign rallies and the president's "tweetstorms" attacking mainstream media as allegations of the Ukraine pressure campaign circulated. Holzer provides vivid historical vignettes, but little analysis of how the current moment compares to 18th- and 19th-century precedents. Readers will be more entertained than enlightened. (May)

Saving the Last Rhinos: The Life of a Frontline Conservationist

Grant Fowlds and Graham Spence. Pegasus, \$27.95 (352p) ISBN 978-1-64313-506-9

Fowlds's straightforward and winning memoir, cowritten with journalist Spence (*The Elephant Whisperer*), recounts his career in wildlife conservation, focusing on the battle against rhinoceros poaching. Providing brief but helpful context, Fowlds describes his childhood on his family's sheep and cattle ranch in South Africa, where he developed his love for animals. Subsequent sections deal with Fowlds's experiences moving the family business from farming to game ranching and then preservation and tourism. Initially holding "a couple of giraffes, 12 zebras and a herd of impala and blesbok," Amakhala Game Reserve eventually grew to include lions, leopards, rhinos, elephants, and Cape buffalos. Fowlds forcefully rails against the



"killers... with dart guns and chemicals" who would sneak onto the reserve "under cover of darkness" to hack off the rhinos' horns. He also describes fighting back,

with measures that have included extensive rehab for injured rhinos, horse patrols through the bush, and a fact-finding mission to Vietnam, a major destination for the stolen horns, due to their supposed medicinal qualities. With this appealing book, Fowlds issues a stirring call to action and shines a revealing light on the "horrible,

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howling reality of wildlife crime at the front line." With color photos. (May)

★ This Is Not My Memoir

André Gregory and Todd London. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$26 (224p) ISBN 978-0-374-91031-0

In this perceptive, nonlinear memoir, director Gregory, who wrote and starred in *My Dinner with Andre*, offers anecdotal reflections on his artistic life. Gregory, with London (*An Ideal Theater*), writes of his Russian Jewish family, who fled Germany for Paris, where he was born in 1934. They then immigrated to the U.S., where his father, a wealthy, cosmopolitan businessman, shuttled the family between New York City and L.A. Gregory recalls the comings and goings of such stars as Gracie Allen, George Burns, and the Marx Brothers in the L.A. house his parents rented from writer Thomas Mann. He attended Harvard University in 1952, then moved to Europe to work in theater. Gregory explains that he learned about directing from his work as part of the Berliner Ensemble (how to take his time directing and to be clear and simple in his work) and chronicles his influences both theatrical (Samuel Beckett, Bertold Brecht, and Jerzy Grotowski) and spiritual (he traveled to Tibet to visit a Buddhist monk). But it's his reflections on his 1981 film *My Dinner with Andre* that standout, as when he discusses his work with director Louis Malle and costar and cowriter Wallace Shawn ("Some believe in the miraculous, and others simply don't," he writes about the characters. "There is an Andre who believes and a Wally who never will"). Film lovers and theatergoers will delight in Gregory's reminiscences. (May)

Those Who Forget: My Family's Story in Nazi Europe— a Memoir, a History, a Warning

Geraldine Schwarz, trans. from the French by Laura Marris. Scribner, \$28 (320p) ISBN 978-1-5011-9908-0

In this astute debut, German-French journalist Schwarz, granddaughter of a Nazi Party member, examines how the denials and excuses of people like her German grandparents helped create the current revival of "alt-right" nationalism. While digging through family file cabinets in Manheim, Germany, in the early 2000s,

Schwarz discovers a document showing that her paternal grandfather purchased a Jewish family's oil company in 1938 for nearly nothing. She digs deeper into her family history and discovers that her grandparents attempted to justify their wartime activity as *Mitläufers*—"people who followed the current"—until the 1960s when the televised trial of former Nazi official Adolf Eichmann recalled mass murders and crimes against humanity, which most people had attempted to forget. As Schwarz explains, within decades, however, people like her grandparents attempted to rewrite or forgive past actions, which, in turn, allowed hatred to fester: "The most dangerous monster is not a megalomaniacal and violent leader, but us, the people who make him possible, who give him the power to lead." This timely memoir also serves as a perceptive look at the current rise of far-right nationalism throughout Europe and the U.S. (May)

Trumpocalypse: Restoring American Democracy

David Frum. Harper, \$28.99 (272p) ISBN 978-0-06-297841-7

Atlantic writer Frum follows *Trumpocracy* (2018) with a brisk and carefully reasoned guide to "protect[ing] the American constitutional system from Trump and after Trump." After rehashing the damage Trumpism has already caused or exacerbated, including congressional dysfunction, the undermining of U.S. foreign relations, and the resurgence of white supremacy, Frum argues that to win in the 2020 elections and beyond, progressives need to back moderate candidates who can find common ground with conservative voters. Once in office, Democrats should, according to Frum, do away with the congressional filibuster, confer statehood to Washington, D.C., "deter gerrymandering," and pass legislation requiring future presidential candidates to make their tax returns public. He also suggests that by curtailing undocumented immigration, Democrats can "solidify a sense of national belonging" and improve their chances of passing healthcare reforms. He advises liberals to stop attacking the fossil fuel industry for causing climate change, and instead offer solutions "based on social consensus," such as carbon taxes, solar energy, and wind farms. Frum's caustic

treatment of "woke messaging" will grate on committed leftists, but he presents a cogent argument for taking the middle path to electoral and legislative victory. Democrats debating how best to beat Trump should consider this well-informed directive. Agent: Jay Mandel, WME. (May)

You're Doing Great...

and Other Reasons to Stay Alive

Tom Papa. St. Martin's, \$27.99 (304p)
ISBN 978-1-250-24039-2

Comedian Papa (*Your Dad Stole My Rake*) offers a delightful set of upbeat and candidly humorous essays on the challenges of modern living. Society is "inundated, twenty-four hours a day, with news, images, and ideas of all kinds... and it's messing with our heads," he writes. His antidote: be grateful, relax, and stop trying to be perfect ("No one is happy all the time.... Whenever I see couples posting about how in love they are, I know they're in trouble"). Papa, a Gen Xer who had a common-sense New Jersey Italian-American upbringing, is unapologetic about his passion for eating: "There's too much happiness and history to put an end to it... who cares if you're a little fat?" In "Let's Go Back," a touching departure from his straight-up humor, Papa writes to a deceased college friend about their shabby house share ("It's hard when you outgrow something you love. It's even harder when you lose the people that came with it"). In other essays, Papa recalls a river tubing accident ("It wasn't awesome. Breaking a couple ribs on a rock at the bottom of a waterfall is stupid"), as well as the joys of living in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood in the 1990s. This collection is a clever respite for readers looking for light-hearted escape from their daily lives. (May)

Vexed:

Ethics Beyond Political Tribes

James Mumford. Bloomsbury Continuum, \$28 (224p) ISBN 978-1-4729-6634-6

Knotty partisan issues get an energetic rethink in this wide-ranging treatise in applied political ethics. Political philosopher Mumford (*Ethics at the Beginning of Life*) critiques ideological "package deals"—conservatives are pro-guns and antiabortion, for example, while liberals are antigun and pro-choice—by exposing the contradictions in a haphazard selection of policy

stances. On the left, he argues, liberals' support for physician-assisted suicide contradicts their commitment to protecting marginalized groups (namely sick, lonely old people), while modern hookup culture is a form of soulless sexual consumerism that progressives should deplore instead of condone. ("I want her to get to a nunnery," he jokes of his own daughter.) On the right, he contends, conservatives' "family values" clash with their resistance to unions that stabilize working-class families by improving wages and working conditions, while their support for legal restrictions on ex-convicts in hiring, voting, and renting undermines their ethos of personal responsibility. Mumford's analyses are animated and fair-minded but not always original; his claim that conservative anti-abortionists should want to protect postpartum life through gun control, for example, is an old one that has persuaded few Second Amendment stalwarts. Mumford's thought-provoking argument for ethical consistency fails to knock loose the entrenched dogmas fueling today's political antagonisms. (May)

Religion/Spirituality

A Gentle Answer: Our "Secret Weapon" in an Age of Us Against Them

Scott Sauls. Thomas Nelson, \$18.99 trade paper (224p) ISBN 978-1-4002-1655-0

Sauls (*Irresistible Faith*), senior pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church in Nashville, Tenn., provides a fresh look at the Christian response to division and hostility in what he considers today's "culture of suspicion, mistrust, and us-against-them." Much of society has come to view some Christians as hypocrites and partisan political opponents, he writes. Worried about a decline in evangelism (included are statistics showing Christians to be increasingly unlikely to share their faith), he cites a lack of Christian empathy as the root cause for the current passiveness of many believers and argues for rejection of religious pride and emulation of Jesus's spirit toward others: "Armed with a gentle answer, modeled and provided by our gentle Savior himself, it is time we got about the business of mending our fractured world with a presence that is less combative and more gentle and

kind." For readers apt to jump to righteous retaliation against wrongdoing or who feel forced to turn the other cheek, he suggests responding to criticism with grace, harnessing the energy of anger for good, and speaking out against injustices to strike a balance between righteous anger and forgiveness. Sauls's ability to acknowledge the shaky reputation of Christianity without judgment is refreshing and welcome. This patiently argued work will appeal to Christians as a persuasive rebuke to defaulting to defensiveness. (June)

The Power of Ritual: Turning Everyday Activities into Soulful Practices

Casper ter Kuile. HarperOne, \$26.99 (224p) ISBN 978-0-06-288181-6

Ter Kuile, cohost of the podcast *Harry Potter and the Sacred Text*, demonstrates in his thoughtful debut how the nonreligious can "liberate the gifts of tradition" to foster greater spiritual connection in their lives. He argues that, while formal religious affiliation may be waning, spiritual practices remain relevant because they can cultivate bonds to the self, others, the natural world, and the transcendent. Ter Kuile explains the significance of a variety of religious practices, including pilgrimage, prayer, and meditation, and proposes ways to capture their significance through everyday activities ("anything can become a spiritual practice—gardening, painting, singing, snuggling, sitting") by focusing on intention, attention, and repetition. This approach leads to inventive explorations of social trends; for instance, the famously cultish appeal of the Crossfit fitness program is explained in terms of vulnerability and community. In ter Kuile's understanding, religious traditions are "inherently creative" and therefore good starting points for considering personalized, meaningful spiritual practices. The Jewish tradition of Sabbath, for example, is reenvisioned by the author as structured "alone time." He also discusses ways to apply the devotional practices developed for reading the Bible, such as giving blessings, to engage with literature more generally. Those who are beginning to explore spirituality will find many rich ideas. (June)

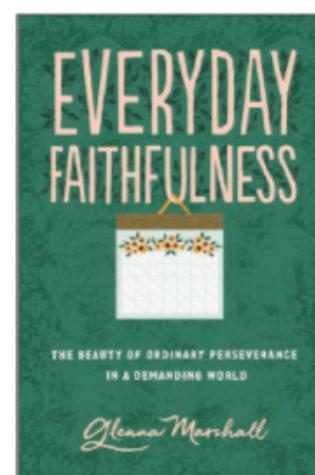
Everyday Faithfulness: The Beauty of Ordinary Perseverance in a Demanding World

Glenna Marshall. Crossway, \$14.99 trade paper (176p) ISBN 978-1-4335-6729-2

In this instructional study, pastor's wife Marshall (*The Promise Is His Presence*) examines the practice of disciplined perseverance during challenging times. Railing against society's expectations of instant gratification, she writes: "We desire instant returns for our minimal efforts, but a lifetime marked by steadfast faith doesn't happen overnight. Diligent, unremarkable practices make way for lifelong spiritual growth." Marshall discusses methods for remaining faithful, such as studying the Bible, praying, and getting involved in church. She emphasizes the importance of daily routines and provides practical instruction for developing disciplined habits, such as bible reading and reflection exercises. Readers are encouraged to persevere by leaning on God's faithfulness, and Marshall explains that being faithful every day can help assuage doubts. She also addresses persevering through suffering, spiritual dry spells, and sinfulness: "Faithfulness is not found

in living perfectly but in killing sin regularly."

The scripture-heavy chapters sometimes get bogged down in calls to prayer, but each concludes with examples of



real women who exemplify the simple art of faithfulness. Christians will be emboldened by Marshall's testament to remaining faithful and the benefits of daily devotional practices. (May)

I Choose Victory: Moving from Victor to Victim

Cynthia Garrett. Salem, \$16.99 trade paper (216p) ISBN 978-1-68451-051-1

In this spirited memoir, TV host Garrett (*Prodigal Daughter*) shares how to break free from the victim mentality and choose to live freely. She calls all who have ever felt victimized to arms: "We are called conquerors, overcomers, victorious,

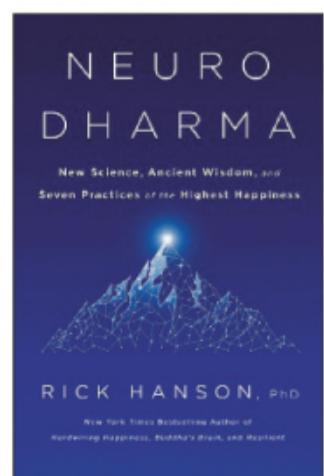
and loved. We are never called victims.” Garrett reveals her struggle to overcome victimization, as well as debilitating circumstances that she experienced during her career, including rape, sexual harassment, and cancer. By surrendering to Christ, she found peace and the freedom to live a “victorious life.” Garrett identifies three “war zones” that Christians encounter—personal, spiritual, and political—and devotes chapters to practices within each area, such as the dangerous effects lust and pride can have on one’s personal life. She explains how factors such as race and class can foster a victim mindset, and offers affirmations and suggested activities for rebuilding confidence. Drawing from personal examples and biblical references, Garrett shows readers how to recognize a “poverty of the mind” mentality, stop blaming others, and conquer fear while also confronting pride. Her authoritative prose encourages spiritual growth—even under dire life circumstances—and she reminds Christian readers of God’s unconditional love. While Garrett addresses women throughout, any reader can learn from her moving story of leaving behind brokenness to find inner healing. (May)

Neurodharma: New Science, Ancient Wisdom, and Seven Practices of the Highest Happiness

Rick Hanson. Harmony, \$26.99 (352p)
ISBN 978-0-5931-3546-4

Psychologist Hanson (*Buddha's Brain*) explores the neuroscience of Buddhist psychology and meditation in this stimulating study. Drawing on scientific research about the benefits of meditation practice, Hanson presents a framework of seven practices tied to the Buddhist process of awakening: steady the mind, warming the heart, resting in fullness,

finding wholeness, receiving oneness, opening into allness, and finding timelessness. He also argues that meditation increases the brain's ability to form new



habits. For example, mental anguish, he writes, is a consequence of different parts of the mind struggling against each other; meditation can rewire the brain to sit at the “emergent edge of now” before the onset of mental suffering. Though the reading suggestions on neuroscience and Buddhist works highlighted in boxes throughout seem superfluous, embedded in each chapter are wide-ranging, useful instructions related to meditative practices. This highly accessible primer on the neuroscience of Buddhist psychology and meditation will appeal to novice and expert meditators alike. (May)

Unholy:

Why White Evangelicals Worship at the Altar of Donald Trump

Sarah Posner. Crown, \$28 (352p) ISBN 978-1-984820-42-6

Posner (*God's Profits*), reporting fellow at Type Investigations, reveals in this trenchant study the modern white religious right as a group anxious about losing power in a changing country and determined to rebuild America with white Christians at its center. To many observers, Posner writes, white evangelicals’ support for Donald Trump is mysterious: after decades of championing moral values in politics, why would they back a liar and adulterer with no history of religious observance? Her answer is straightforward: evangelicals overlooked his less savory characteristics because he was committed to white Christian nationalism. This broader historical view posits that Trump is not an aberration but a fulfillment of 40 years of organized political strategy, and that many of his actions while in office—admiring foreign dictators, promoting views based in far-right extremism—are mirrored in the history of the American religious right. While Posner can get bogged down in the details, as in her meticulous debunking of the notion that Christian nationalism arose in opposition to abortion, overall she is convincing. Posner’s authoritative investigation will be a must-read for those interested in the connections between the Trump presidency and evangelicalism. (May)

★ Yes to Life: In Spite of Everything

Viktor E. Frankl. Beacon, \$19.95 (136p)
ISBN 978-0-8070-0555-2

Based on three public lectures delivered

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FICTION

Actress Anne Enright. Norton, ISBN 978-1-324-00562-9, Mar.

Benediction Olivier Dufault, trans. from the French by Pablo Strauss. Arachnide, ISBN 978-1-4870-0599-3, Mar.

Last Impressions Joseph Kertes. Viking Canada, ISBN 978-0-7352-3821-3, Mar.

★ Silk and Leather: Lesbian Erotica with an Edge, edited by Victoria Villaseñor. Bold Strokes, ISBN 978-1-63555-587-5, Apr.

NONFICTION

The NRA: The Unauthorized History Frank Smyth. Flatiron, ISBN 978-1-250-21028-9, Mar.

The Slippery Slope of Healthcare: Why Bad Things Happen to Healthy Patients and How to Avoid Them Steven Z. Kussin. Rowman & Littlefield, ISBN 978-1-5281-2162-7, Apr.

What It's Like to Be a Bird: From Flying to Nesting, Eating to Singing—What Birds Are Doing, and Why David Allen Sibley. Knopf, ISBN 978-0-307-95789-4, Apr.

in Vienna in 1946, this slim, powerful collection from Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist Frankl (*Man's Search for Meaning*) attests to life's meaning, even in desperate circumstances. Coming less than a year after Frankl's liberation from Auschwitz, Frankl's writings address a postwar “spiritually bombed out” audience that knows the evils of which humanity is capable. Frankl (1905–1997) claims that it is not humanity's role to question life's meaning, but rather it's life that demands people reflect on their purpose. Frankl posits three ways in which humans find meaning: through work; through experiencing nature, art, or love; and through how they accept unwelcome circumstances. He offers an example of a patient of his who lived a meaningful life: a graphic designer who had fallen ill and, no longer able to work, enjoyed reading and music; when dying, he asked for his final morphine shot at the doctor's convenience, thus thinking of others at his last hour. An afterward by Frank Vesely, Frankl's son-in-law, attests to how Frankl's own sense of purpose helped him survive both the Holocaust and subsequent losses. This lovely work transcends its original context, offering wisdom and guidance. (May)

Children's/YA

Picture Books

Hurry Up!

A Book About Slowing Down

Kate Dopirak, illus. by Christopher Silas Neal.

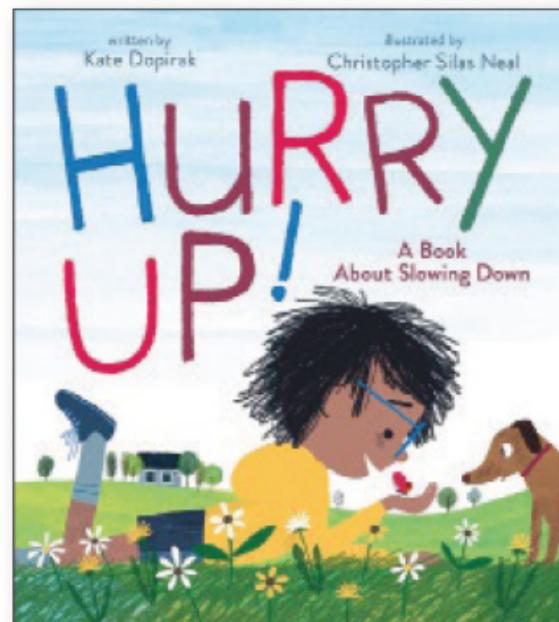
Beach Lane, \$17.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-5344-2497-5

Kids aren't exempt from fast-paced living, especially not the brown-skinned child who stars in this prescription for downtime by the late Dopirak (*Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Car*). Neal (*From Tree to Sea*) visualizes its opening words with images of the child dashing down the stairs and out to the bus: "Hurry up! Hurry down. Hurry round and round... and round." At school, the classroom teems with activity ("Hurry here! Hurry there! Hurry, scurry everywhere!"), and the sprint continues back home, snarled by the family pup tugging at a shoelace. Out for a walk, child and dog continue at the breakneck pace until "STOP!" appears in large letters across the sky, a message from the universe. A page turn reveals a world transformed and on pause. Everything is green as child and pup watch a snail ("Slow things down"), and a tossed stick tumbles lazily end over end before reaching the leaping dog ("Take a break"). A long, luxurious afternoon ends at dusk as the pair head home. Neal's visual pacing takes readers from frenetic activity to solitary moonlit slumber in one smooth arc, embodying the shift to calm that all creatures crave—and need. Ages up to 8. Author's agent: Tracey Adams, Adams Literary. Illustrator's agent: Stephen Barr, Writers House. (May)

What Sound Is Morning?

Grant Snider. Chronicle, \$15.99 (48p) ISBN 978-1-4521-7993-3

In this standalone follow-on to *What Color Is Night?*, a narrator invokes early morning sounds as the world begins to stir. Economical sentences draw attention to noises that are easy to overlook: "Lights click on,/ a cat softly creeps" reads one spread as dawn reddens the sky above houses shrouded in darkness. Snider's spreads, splashed with brilliant, milky hues on matte paper, have the feel of silkscreen



Dopirak and Neal suggest an alternative to constant action in their mellowing picture book (reviewed on this page).

images. As "the silent sun rises," loose lines pick out trees and soft human silhouettes, taillights on cars and trucks, a cityscape. One page zooms in on a single household ("A shower trickles,/ a mirror squeaks"); another lends appreciation to a garbage truck on a silent block. Throughout, scenes portray beauty in even the most banal examples of a built environment, such as anonymous, office-like buildings whose windows reflect the sky and whose lawn blooms with flowerlike jets: "Sprinklers hiss on summer lawns." Concluding with an invitation to "throw open the window// and fill the world with your song," Snider's creation uncovers everyday wonders by re-creating a single sense with language, form, and color. Ages 2–4. Agent: Judy Hansen, Hansen Literary. (May)

This Is Gus

Chris Chatterton. Penguin Workshop, \$17.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-593-09736-6

Gus the beagle has a permanent scowl, refuses to fetch, and doesn't want to make friends. Chatterton crafts a running joke of the dog's implacable dourness with a refrainlike text: "He doesn't like cake. He doesn't like balloons. He doesn't like presents." Gus seems even less charmed when a cute beagle puppy—who is also revealed to be the narrator—emerges from a wrapped gift. The puppy is convinced it has won Gus over, even though that's clearly not the case. Will anything make Gus less grumpy? The story's straightforward revelation that Gus loves sausages and is even capable of sharing one with

the puppy is a bit of a letdown after he is established with such an indelible outlook. But the pictures are still great fun: Chatterton distills the images down to a few details, sets his gloomy Gus against bright saturated backgrounds, and assigns him a relatively unchanging expression and profile, regardless of what is going on around him—he doesn't even budge when a birthday balloon is tied to his tail. Ages 3–5. (May)

Three Squeezes

Jason Pratt, illus. by Chris Sheban. Roaring Brook, \$17.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-250-31345-4

"When you could neither talk nor stand,/ life's hourglass still filled with sand" begins this lyrical picture book. The titular "three squeezes" refers to the many different kinds of embraces between a loving father and his son throughout their lives together, starting with "three soft squeezes" when the boy is an infant and ending with those that the now-adult child gives his parent "when I can neither talk nor stand." Each textual set of squeezes is rendered in calligraphic typography with a slightly different modifier: after a nightmare, the father gives the son "three long squeezes"; the two make up after an argument with "three strong squeezes." *Love You Forever* fans will appreciate debut author Pratt's literary versifying. Illustrations by Sheban (*What a Cold Needs*), which combine bighearted cartooned renderings with warm washes of color and luminosity, strike just the right notes of comedy (when the boy screams at night, the family cat arches its back) and poignancy (the family dog, initially a puppy, ages along with its young owner). Thanks to his artistry, time flies sweetly. Ages 3–6. Author's agent: Erica Rand Silverman, Stimola Literary. Illustrator's agent: Rosemary Stimola, Stimola Literary. (May)

Natsumi's Song of Summer

Robert Paul Weston, illus. by Misa Saburi. Tundra, \$17.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-7352-6541-7

Weston writes his tale in elegant tanka, a form defined in his author's note—it's a haiku-like poem with two additional lines of seven syllables each. Natsumi's summer pleasures include "sun, the heat, the cool bursts/ of plum rain, heavy and sweet." This summer, her cousin Jill, whom she has

continued on p. 67

A TOAST TO MOMS

Picture books celebrate mamas and mother figures.

Mama Needs a Minute

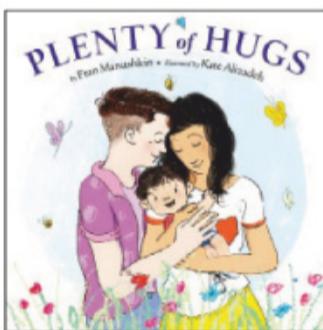
Nicole Sloan. Andrews McMeel, \$8.99 (16p) ISBN 978-1-5248-5457-7

Sloan, founder of online space the Weird Mom Club, relays an ode to self-care and parenting's hectic nature in this board book. Addressing an unnamed child in uneven meter, the narrator describes her devotion ("I'll make you those funny pancakes you like") while communicating an appeal that's likely familiar to most caretakers: "This mama needs a minute." Simple illustrations in a limited, modern palette portray blue-, green-, and lavender-skinned mothers and children playing together—and taking moments apart. Extolling the virtues of "me time" amid parenthood's plentiful requirements, Sloan succeeds in gently encouraging healthy boundaries between children and their respective adults. After all, kids "need it too./ Some time to explore the world—just you." Ages 2–4. (Feb.)

Plenty of Hugs

Fran Manushkin, illus. by Kate Alizadeh. Dial, \$17.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-525-55401-1

Two mothers and their toddler find joy in spending time together as this picture book's text describes a world in which "The sun shines on everyone./ There are plenty of fish in the sea." In Alizadeh's digitally refined pencil illustrations,



the affectionate family—the child grins throughout, one mom sports a tattoo and an undercut—snuggles in bed, bikes to a farmstand and a zoo, and heads back home before sharing a meal and moving into their bedtime routine.

Manushkin's hopeful lines emphasize both a feeling of abundance and a connection to the natural world: "There's plenty of blue for bluebirds,/ and red for strawberries too./ There is grass for gazelles,/ for each panda bamboo,/ and plenty of noodles/ for me and you." Cozy illustrations lend a classic sensibility to this incidentally inclusive bedtime tale for the youngest readers. Ages 2–5. (Apr.)

My Mama

Annemarie van Haeringen, trans. from the Dutch by Bill Nagelkerke. Gecko, \$17.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-776572-67-0

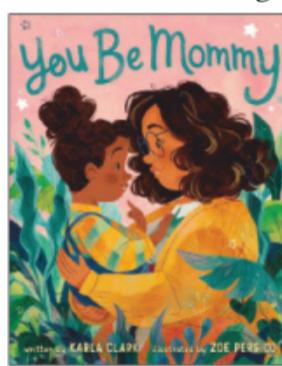
A playful young elephant wearing star-covered trousers reflects on his beloved mother in this meandering tribute. "I've known my mama for a long time. For my whole life, actually," the text begins; the narrator goes on to offer a child's-eye view of all the ways he spends time with her. They play cars ("I like that, as long as she tidies them up afterwards"), "water" plants (the small elephant pees into his),

and sometimes clash ("My mama is never angry with me... But when she is, she's really ANGRY!"). Set mostly against simple white backgrounds, van Haeringen's spare drawings have a retro quality, emphasized by Mama's colorful caftan and long red necklace. The elephant child's earnest, oblivious commentary has a sweet humor that may play more to adults than to kids—"I'm always the one in charge," he declares—but van Haeringen's scenes make it clear: Mama is the architect of this elephant's world. Ages 2–5. (Mar.)

You Be Mommy

Karla Clark, illus. by Zoe Persico. Feiwel and Friends, \$17.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-250-22538-2

A tuckered-out mother requests a role reversal in this playful rhyming picture book. Regaling a young child with her day's tasks ("She worked all day at the computer store./ Came home to a big mess on the floor!"), the bespectacled,



brown-skinned mom sweetly requests that her daughter "Read me a story and pat my tummy?/ Wipe my nose when it gets runny?" In Clark's repeating exhortation: "Mommy's too tired to be Mommy tonight." Her daughter gamely attempts to facilitate a nighttime routine but, in classic fashion, soon finds herself getting tired, too. Vibrant digital illustrations by Persico portray a comfortable home for the duo's gentle game. Though Mommy's plight is easy to empathize with, there's no hint of resentment: this mama may be exhausted, but she loves her kid all the same. Ages 2–6. (Mar.)

Who's Your Real Mom?

Bernadette Green, illus. by Anna Zobel. Scribble, \$16.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-950354-24-5

This imaginative picture book affirmation of family centers brown-skinned Elvi, who has two mothers. When Elvi's friend Nicholas asks which of her parents is the "real" one ("Only the one who had you in her tummy can be your real mom.... Which one is that?"), Elvi offers a plethora of whimsical answers: the one who "can do a handstand on one finger," is "a pirate in disguise," and "writes in a secret language only whales can read." When Nicholas insists on knowing the truth, Elvi cleverly reframes the subject, defining her mother in ways every child can understand: "the one who holds me when I'm scared... the one who tucks me into bed," Green writes. Hatched and stippled textures in ink and marker—layered digitally by Zobel and done in a palette of browns, blues, and goldenrod—offer the illustrations a snug, soft feel. Ages 4–7. (June)

continued from p. 65

never met, comes to Japan to share in those enjoyments. They become fast friends, but Natsumi hesitates before showing Jill the cicadas whose calls fill the air: "Insects frightened some people./ What if Jill was frightened, too?" In Saburi's digital art, the two cousins are wide-eyed, doll-like figures; Jill, with dark brown skin and black hair, peers into the tree branches as pink-skinned Natsumi worries. Fortunately, Jill loves the cicadas, and when she learns that the insects wait for years before emerging "to meet their friends," she spots the parallel: "Just like us," she tells Natsumi. Saburi's thick black lines recall traditional Japanese wood-block prints, and she portrays the creatures and summer flowers that Natsumi treasures in rich detail. In the collaborators' (*Sakura's Cherry Blossoms*) handling, Natsumi's cross-cultural friendship with Jill centers on a shared love of natural life and models openness to new experiences.

Ages 3–7. (May)

When the Storm Comes

Linda Ashman, illus. by Tae-eun Yoo. Penguin/Paulsen, \$17.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-399-54609-9

"What do you do when the clouds roll in,/ When the wind chimes clang and the weather vanes spin?" In verse that rolls like a sea shanty, Ashman (*Take Your Pet to School Day*) watches as animals and people ride out a storm. Bad weather looms even on the copyright page: trees blow sideways, and gray clouds threaten a peaceful blue sky. As the story begins, a girl looks out her window with a worried expression. A family of foxes watches expectantly, too: "We watch./ We sniff./ We perk our ears,/ And listen as the rumbling nears." A child runs home as a parent beckons. While humans take shelter ("We close. We cover,/ Latch and tie"), gulls seek coves and whales dive deep. Pencil and digital spreads by Yoo (*Kitten and the Night Watchman*) have a hand-worked feel, with loosely drawn lines and sponge print textures that suggest the advancing pressure and glad release of a storm passing. Final spreads show the ocean-adjacent community cleaning up, then gathering for refreshments. The emphasis is clear; in the face of natural forces, human and animal communities are alike in their vulnerability.

Ages 3–7. Author's agent: Jennifer Mattson, Andrea Brown Literary. Illustrator's agent:

Holly McGhee, *Pippin Properties*. (May)

★ Lift

Minh Lê, illus. by Dan Santat. Little, Brown, \$17.99 (56p) ISBN 978-1-36803692-4

Collaborators Lê and Santat (*Drawn Together*) mix a tale about sibling rivalry with a classic fantasy quest. Spare text by Lê along with Santat's panel artwork tell



the story of Iris, whose small, special pleasure is pushing the button in her building's elevator. One awful day, her task is appropriated, without warning, by her baby brother. Her parents and sibling beam with pride; Iris scowls. After an elevator repairman's visit tackles the out-of-service elevator next door, Iris retrieves the discarded button panel. "I wish I could be anywhere but here," she fumes. She tapes it to the wall next to her closet, and presses: "Ding!" Light breaks across her face as the closet door opens; her amazement presages wonders that readers can't yet see. Iris's first foray into a new world ends quickly, but she soon gets another chance, and a dazzling adventure unfolds—until an unexpected but very familiar voice brings her back. Santat's comedic versatility and theatrical use of light give the story cinematic momentum, while Lê's insight into Iris's conflicting emotions adds depth and warmth to the tale. Journeys to other worlds, Iris discovers, mean little without the warmth of her own. Ages 4–8. Author's agent: Stephen Barbara, Inkwell Management. Illustrator's agent: Jodi Reamer, Writers House. (May)

The Little Blue Cottage

Kelly Jordan, illus. by Jessica Courtney-Tickle. Page Street Kids, \$17.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-62414-923-8

In blank verse, newcomer Jordan explores the bond between a girl and her seaside summer home: "They grew up together/ from summer to summer./ The little blue cottage. / The little bay girl." Jordan portrays the cottage as a character, a living being that rejoices when its humans return: "All year, the cottage waited for summer to return,/ and with it, the little girl."

Courtney-Tickle paints the brown-skinned child swimming, fishing, and dreaming on a bedroom window seat next to a large round window: "You are my favorite place," she tells it. Her family, mixed-race and, eventually, multigenerational, is a loving presence, sitting around a kitchen table stacked with pancakes and surveying the ocean in rocking chairs. One year, though, they don't return. Readers may worry as trees and weeds grow tall through an unexplained absence, but all is ultimately well: "Gravel crunched under feet/ and the little cottage cried, 'At last!'" Retro spreads by Courtney-Tickle (*The Perfectly Perfect Wish*) portray the small blue house with a stumpy chimney and a port-hole window; the cottage's personification adds a touch of magic to this ode to a beloved refuge. Ages 4–8. Author's agent: Stephanie Fretwell-Hill, Red Fox Literary. Illustrator's agent: Arabella Stein, the Bright Agency. (May)

My Rainy Day Rocket Ship

Markette Sheppard, illus. by Charly Palmer. S&S/Millner, \$17.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-5344-6177-2

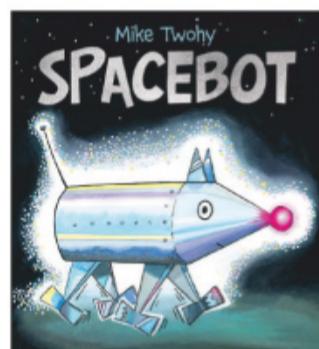
Bright, full-bleed paintings by Palmer (*I Can Write the World*) power this tale by Sheppard (*What Is Light?*) about low-tech play. Bold strokes portray a black child gazing out the window, hand absent-mindedly on the head of his comedic sidekick, a small pug. Loosely rhyming verse explains the book's dilemma: rainy weather, inside play, nothing to do, then a light bulb and growing excitement: "Today I'll make something/ really tough—// Like a whole new world/ in a different place—/a galaxy off in/ outer space!" A rocking chair and a cardboard box, tools from Dad (who, with his well-equipped workshop, offers thoughtful help), swimming trunks and goggles for a space-suit, and a dish towel for a flag all make a promising rocket trip: "These will surely/ serve me well./ On this mission,/ I cannot fail." The child's parents show up for the big launch. Loose, chiming lines supply the framework for Palmer's dynamic brushwork, which creates mass and motion while also lingering, on a more contemplative note, on the light that falls over the child's face. Sheppard's emphasis is on making—and on making do with what's at hand—creative play that is nurtured by

supportive parents (and one amusing, licking dog). Ages 4–8. (May)

Spacebot

Mike Twohy. S&S/Wiseman, \$17.99 (48p)
ISBN 978-1-5344-4436-2

When a UFO descends from an inky sky to land in a dog's backyard one night, the yellow pup believes it has found a new friend: the robot that trots out is canine-like, though its snout does feature a mysteriously glowing red ball. But the robot couldn't care less about its earthly counterpart ("Can we play?"/Walks away"); it's looking for the home's bevy of instantly familiar electronic appliances. "Spacebot's here!!!" exclaim the now fully animated



blender, can opener, fridge, toaster, microwave, and vacuum cleaner, all wearing delighted expressions. As the only flesh-and-blood character looks on with a hangdog expression ("Pup's left out./ Starts to pout"), Spacebot supercharges the gadgets so they can fly around the sky like carefree daredevils ("Loopy-loop./ Beep-beep-boop!"). Twohy's (*Stop, Go, Yes, No!*) cheery, buoyant space oddity taps into fantasies of inanimate objects coming to life, while the couplet-based text offers emerging readers simple but rollicking rhymes that encourage word recognition. And even the doggy gets its zero-gravity day (or rather, night) thanks to a parting gift. Ages 4–8. (May)

Fiction

★ A Ceiling Made of Eggshells

Gail Carson Levine. Quill Tree, \$17.99 (400p)
ISBN 978-0-06-287819-9

This sweeping historical novel illuminates the plight of a Jewish family in Spain during the late 15th century. Precocious narrator Loma is just seven when her facility with numbers endears her to her influential financier abuelo after his wife, her beloved abuela, dies in a plague outbreak. Her status as his favorite proves a mixed blessing and one of the narrative's essential tensions. Loma becomes increasingly indispensable to her grandfather as he travels across Spain

collecting taxes for the country's monarchs. As she grows older, however, his requirements of her mean that she must postpone her desire to marry and have children. Infusing her title with historical details about costume, food, and customs, Newbery Honoree Levine (*Ella Enchanted*) deftly conveys the obstacles facing the Jewish community under King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, among them the Inquisition, pressure to convert to Christianity, and eventually expulsion from Spain. Though the narrative unspools slowly, pacing builds considerably in the final chapters as 16-year-old Loma memorably navigates tumult and danger, bravely taking control of her destiny. Ages 8–12.
Agent: Ginger Knowlton, Curtis Brown. (May)

War Is Over

David Almond, illus. by David Litchfield. Candlewick, \$16.99 (128p) ISBN 978-1-5362-0986-0

Taut and teeming with emotion, Almond's historical novel is an affecting portrait of an English boy's perspective on a seemingly endless, unfathomable war. In 1918, John's father has been off fighting in France for so long that John hardly remembers him, and his mother works "overtime, double time" in an enormous



munitions factory. Bewildered by his teacher's declaration that "we are all engaged in the fight to defeat the evil German," John "kept on daring to ask himself, 'I am just a child.'

How can I be at war?" This question frames other experiences: he watches townsfolk pummel a pacifist, imagines being transported to the front, and has a dreamlike encounter with a German boy who's his same age and height and, John senses, is likewise "yearning for the war to end." The straightforward narrative by Almond (*Skellig*) juxtaposes moments of violence and beauty: John's mother explains how to fill a shell with shrapnel and resin, then spreads his bread with homemade rose hip jam. Reinforcing the atmosphere are often haunting black-and-

white illustrations created by Litchfield (*The Bear and the Piano*); one especially effective image shows John watching pigeons overhead morph into shrapnel shells. Ages 9–12. (May)

The Next Great Jane

K.L. Going. Penguin/Dawson, \$16.99 (240p)
ISBN 978-0-8037-34753

Jane Austen fan and aspiring writer Jane, 12, can't wait to meet a published author—when bestselling romance novelist J.E. Fairfax visits her tiny Maine town, she looks forward to learning "the secret to literary success." Unfortunately, it's also the night of the worst hurricane in a decade, and after a series of misadventures, Jane must grapple with two unwelcome visitors: Fairfax's irritating son, Devon, and Jane's own screenwriter mother, who arrives suddenly from Hollywood with her new fiancé. Jane, who has always been happy living with her oceanographer father, is terrified that her mother's sudden interest in joint custody will mean having to leave loved ones behind. To tip the scales in her father's favor, Jane decides he needs an impressive girlfriend and schemes to set him up with Fairfax. *Going* (*Bumpety, Dunkety, Thumpety-Thump!*) offers a fitting depiction of life in a small coastal town—three grades share a single classroom at the small school—and shrewdly imbues her lively romantic comedy with timely discussions of natural science and climate change, as well as advice on what it takes to become a successful author. Ages 10–14.
Agent: Ginger Knowlton, Curtis Brown. (May)

Lemon Lavender Is Not Fine

Elle Pallmore. Elle Pallmore, \$10.99 paper (279p) ISBN 978-1-07-667858-4

Pallmore's debut celebrates the simultaneous fragility and strength of the teen spirit as it follows 16-year-old wallflower Lemon Lavender's turbulent junior year. When shy, awkward Lemon falls for new guy Graham Stuart—a gorgeous, sensitive Scotsman who instantly catches the attention of Westmoore High's female population—she worries that it's hopeless, but she also can't help her feelings. Though Lemon desires to remain inconspicuous, classmate Madeline's popular vlog persona, Lady Westmoore, makes her a public target. As Lemon struggles to navigate her family's shifting dynamics in the aftermath of her

lauded older sister running away, Westmoore High reveals itself as a vicious microcosm in which insidious rumors fester. Though Graham occasionally seems frustratingly dense, Lemon herself is well fleshed out. Readers will sympathize with her plight to accommodate her cruel schoolmates' and neglectful parents' conflicting judgments as she struggles toward agency and self-confidence. While the novel has its fair share of predictable rom-com moments, Pallmore's fresh voice successfully reifies one modern teenager's high school experience amid cyberbullying and familial change. 13-up. (*Self-published*)

The Summer of Impossibilities

Rachael Allen. Amulet, \$17.99 (384p)
ISBN 978-1-4197-4112-8

Summer at a lake: what could be better for four rising seniors? Except that the girls are being dragged to South Carolina by their mothers, old friends who rally around Scarlett and Skyler's mom when her marriage hits the rocks. Scarlett, a recovering cutter, would rather be home with her boyfriend, but her twin, Skyler, is grateful for an excuse to miss summer softball. Amelia Grace, who accidentally kissed a girl in front of her church, is glad she isn't being sent to conversion camp. And Ellie is a serious tennis player who could really use some friends; she's hoping for some kind of "Ya-Ya Sisterhood club for female empowerment/shenanigans." Allen (*A Taxonomy of Love*) tips her hat to the summer sisterhood tradition she's working in while updating its inclusivity: Ellie is Muslim, Skyler has arthritis, and Amelia Grace wants a church that accepts her. The characters' alternating first-person voices are distinctive, the writing is sharp, and messages about honesty and being oneself add ballast to this satisfying multigenerational story of four girls finding the people they need. Ages 13-up. Agent: Susan Hawk, Upstart Crow Literary. (May)

★ Felix Ever After

Kacen Callender. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray, \$18.99 (368p) ISBN 978-0-06-282025-9

Black trans artist Felix Love, 17, has never been in love. His mostly supportive single father still struggles to call him by his name and pronouns, and Felix is

convinced that nobody except his ride-or-die bestie, wealthy Ezra Patel, can appreciate him for who he is. Felix is attending an ultracompetitive arts summer program to have a better shot at a full scholarship to Brown when someone posts Felix's dead name beside photos of him, pre-transition, in the school's lobby. As Ezra begins dating a new guy and the competition for Brown heats up, Felix's plot to get revenge throws him onto the path of love and self-discovery—concepts he's been anxious about for as long as he can remember. Callender (*King and the Dragonflies*) excels, producing an exhilarating cast of queer characters, many of whom are people of color, who are as relatable as they are realistic, and a whodunit that will keep readers guessing to the last twist. Protagonist Felix is like the story itself—boldly empathic, hopeful, and full of love. This top-notch depiction of a messy, complicated, romantic young artist navigating the bumpy road to self-love and self-determination sticks its landing at every turn.

Ages 14-up. Agent: Beth Phelan, Gallt & Zacker Literary. (May)

Four Days of You and Me

Miranda Kenneally. Sourcebooks Fire, \$17.99 (352p) ISBN 978-1-4926-8413-8

The four days of the title are four class trips that high schoolers Lulu Wells and Alex Rouvelis go on each May from freshman to senior year. The first brings them together romantically, despite popular baseball player Alex having beaten out Lulu—a vegan who ran on school sustainability—for class president. By the next year, they've broken up, and so it goes, with flashbacks to key moments in their always passionate, if not always happy, relationship. Kenneally (*You Make My Heart Race*) shows the couple's feelings, realities, and dreams maturing into something real—Alex has to help out all the time at his family's Greek restaurant, and he'll need a scholarship to attend college; Lulu's working on a graphic novel that she hopes to publish. Though narrator Lulu feels more like a set of traits and hobbies than a flesh-and-blood character, showing Lulu and Alex and their friends growing up and into themselves is a clever way of telescoping the vast development that occurs

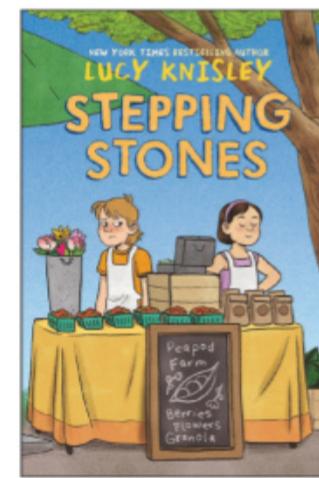
over the four years of high school. Ages 14-up. Agent: Jim McCarthy, Dystel, Goderich & Bourret. (May)

Comics

Stepping Stones (Peapod Farm #1)

Lucy Knisley. Random House Graphic, \$20.99 (224p) ISBN 978-0-593-12524-3; \$12.99 paper ISBN 978-1-984896-84-1

Knisley's autobiographical comics chops are on full display in her first graphic novel for kids, a fictionalized telling of her childhood experiences. When Jen moves to the country with her mother after her parents' divorce, she is less than thrilled to trade urban comic book shops and Chinese takeout for chicken coop-related chores and her mother's disagreeable new boyfriend, Walter. Resentment deepens as Jen helps



her mom at the farmers market—left alone to handle sales though math isn't her strong suit—and Walter's two daughters, Andy and Reese, begin arriving each weekend to share her room. Missing her old life and feeling unfavorably compared to know-it-all Andy, Jen tries to adjust, finding expression and self-worth in her art as she comes to love her "part-time sisters" and navigates Walter's seeming inability to treat her as equal to them.

With specificity that lends itself to universality, Knisley balances humor and deeply felt emotion to capture the particular unfairness of being a child at the mercy of parental decisions. Art centers around the gentle realism of Knisley's established style, augmented with pencil drawings in the young protagonist's developing hand. Age 8–12. (May)

Always Human

Ari North. Little Bee, \$24.99 (256p) ISBN 978-1-4998-1110-0; \$14.99 paper ISBN 978-1-4998-1109-4

Published in partnership with GLAAD,

North's queer futuristic romance imagines an alternate Australia in which people employ modifications to alter their appearance, augment their abilities, and even combat illness. Nearly 22-year-old Sunati integrates mods into her daily life, regularly changing her appearance and using memory mods to study. Austen, 18, on the other hand, has an immune condition that prohibits mod use, even for medical reasons, and she struggles to appreciate her natural appearance. After the young women meet in a train station, mutual interest develops as they introduce each other to their worlds. Sunati transports Austen to a VR environment she designed to resemble an endless sky, and Austen takes Sunati to a "naturalist" commune populated by those who can't or won't use mods. Poor communication leads to emotional conflict, punctuated by Sunati's guilt about using mods and Austen's unconfronted insecurities.

Featuring a diverse cast of side characters, the story successfully avoids unfortunate tropes that fictional queer relationships frequently suffer. Though the collected webcomic can sometimes feel disjointed, soft, expressive art adds a visceral charge to the couple's very human experiences, which range from excitement and affection to pain and doubt. Final art not seen by PW. Ages 12-up. Agent: Maria Vicente, P.S. Literary Agency. (May)

Nonfiction

Clever Hans: The True Story of the Counting, Adding, and Time-Telling Horse

Kerri Kokias, illus. by Mike Lowery. Putnam, \$17.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-525-51498-5

Clever Hans was a horse who astounded early-20th-century audiences in Berlin with his cognitive talents—he could purportedly tell time and tap out coin values with his hooves—and who turned out to be clever in a different way than originally thought. Hans was also an inadvertent hero, revolutionizing experimental design by showing, as the book's afterword explains, "how scientists can accidentally change the way that animals, and even people, react when they are being studied." It all plays out as a rollicking science mystery, with observations

resulting in twists and turns, and Kokias (*Snow Sisters!*) and Lowery (*Knot Cannot*) are more than up for the task. The text takes an unhurried, reportorial tone ("Scientists, scholars, and religious and military leaders from around the world jumped at the chance to see Clever Hans"), while the thoughtful cartooning portrays Hans himself as downright adorable. Comics-style framing breaks the story into easy-to-grasp chunks, with diagrams, dialogue balloons, and handwritten asides ("Maybe this meant that Clever Hans was a PSYCHIC MIND

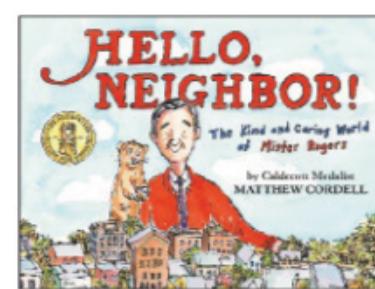
READER!") that punctuate, nudge, and tickle until the case is cracked—leaving readers feeling a little savvier about

the world around them. Ages 4–8. Author's agent: Tricia Lawrence, Erin Murphy Literary. Illustrator's agent: Susan McCabe, Lilla Rogers Studio. (May)

★ Hello, Neighbor! The Kind and Caring World of Mister Rogers

Matthew Cordell. Holiday House/Porter, \$18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-8234-4618-6

When readers first see Fred Rogers in this authorized picture book biography, he's an instantly recognizable figure playing his beloved piano; musical notes, hearts, and more pour forth from the instrument. Caldecott Medalist Cordell begins his story on the TV set of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, then circles back to Rogers's youth in Pittsburgh, detailing his loving family and appreciation of music, his sometimes painful childhood ("Fred was shy and often lonely"), and his unexpected discovery of television's possibilities for speaking to children: "He would simply be his honest self." Galleries of portraits include the show's inclusive cast of characters and some eminent guests. Drawings framed like television stills recreate the show's famous opening and closing sequences and capture moments happy, "like visiting the circus," and sad, "like saying goodbye to a beloved pet." Cordell acknowledges the vast audience in front of the television screen—and Rogers's



own interest in how things work—with drawings of children

watching in their homes and camera operators maneuvering around the sets. Scribbly lines, soft colors, and earnest storytelling create an open, affectionate atmosphere perfectly in keeping with Rogers's quiet strength and generous heart. Back matter includes photographs and more information. Ages 4–8. Agents: Rosemary Stimola, Stimola Literary Studio and Matthew Shiels, Fred Rogers Productions. (May)

A Bowl Full of Peace

Caren Stelson, illus. by Akira Kusaka.

Carolrhoda, \$17.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-5415-2148-3

Stelson (*Sachiko: A Nagasaki Bomb Survivor's Story*) opens this picture book biography of a Japanese peace activist before the start of WWII. Kusaka, making his U.S. debut, shows Sachiko's family of seven gathered around the table to eat from a bowl that belonged to her grandmother. "Itadakimasu," they intone, expressing gratitude for their food. The war brings air raids, but the cataclysm that shakes Nagasaki in early August is different; the city and everything it holds is incinerated, and Sachiko's little brother, Toshi, is immediately killed. Poisoned by radiation, Sachiko's siblings and parents sicken and die one by one. Her grandmother's bowl miraculously survives, recovered intact from the ruins of their house. Each year in August, Sachiko fills it with ice to remember her family's thirst and suffering. At last, she resolves to tell their story: "The world must know that such a bomb can never be used again." The soft edges of Kusaka's digital artwork mimic pastel images and show the catastrophe and its aftermath directly. The story may well spur discussion about war, but it will require careful context-setting to answer questions about the effects of nuclear war and radiation. Ages 6–11. Author's agent: Rubin Pfeffer, Rubin Pfeffer Content. (May)

MARCH 30, 2020



— YOUR GUIDE TO SELF-PUBLISHING —

Indie Scouting Report • First Lines from BookLife Authors
52 New Titles Listed •

The Trouble with Big Deals

Why huge advances aren't always huge wins for budding authors

BY BROOKE WARNER

Many indie authors dream of landing a traditional book deal with a seven-figure advance to match. Big book deals make publishing news every month, but rarely have we witnessed the blowback and ire that have followed the recent release of *American Dirt*, which has plenty of people questioning the inequities at play when it comes to what kind of authors get such advances. Americans are culturally conditioned to celebrate anyone who makes bucketloads of money for anything, never mind whether it's merited. Like beauty, merit is in the eye of the beholder—especially when it comes to fiction, a genre that's subjective by its very nature. Indie authors are uniquely positioned to recognize this truth, and when it comes to their careers, they would be well served to keep in mind that big money doesn't necessarily equate to meaningful success.

So far in 2020, Publishers Marketplace has reported 14 "major deals," meaning advances of \$500,000 and up. *Publishers Weekly* has run stories about the known seven-figure deals among those, including *The Other*



Black Girl, the debut novel by former Knopf assistant editor Zakiya Dalila Harris, and a memoir by Marie Yovanovitch, the former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine.

How publishing houses dole out advances is complicated, insofar as editors insist that they'll only pay for books they believe can earn out. But P&Ls exist to be manipulated, and there are countless factors at play when it comes to earn-out potential, including foreign, derivative, and serial rights, all of which are difficult—sometimes impossible—to estimate at the point of acquisition. Then there's the fact that taking a huge gamble on a debut or unproven author puts the author's entire career at risk since a "successful" book is one that earns out its advance. This means that a book that sells 10,000 copies and earns out its

\$10,000 advance is successful, whereas a book that sells 25,000 copies and fails to earn out its \$100,000 advance is not. The publisher either drops authors who fail to earn out their advances or offers far less money for their follow-up efforts.

In the 1990s, there were few seven-figure advances, and they were certainly not for debut novelists. The first debut novel to hit the *New York Times* bestseller list in its first week may well have created a new formula for success that involved the seven-figure advance. In 2005, Little, Brown published *The Historian*, Elizabeth Kostova's Dracula story, for which it had paid \$2 million. The publisher spent \$500,000 promoting the book, sent out thousands of ARCs, and sent Kostova on extensive author tours leading up to publication. In the 15 years since, we've seen publishers attempt to create success stories borrowing from this playbook with Cynthia D'Aprix Sweeney's *The Nest*, Kristen Roupenian's *You Know You Want This*, and Jeanine Cummins's *American Dirt*, to name a few of the better known.

During my nine-year tenure as an acquiring editor at Seal Press, which at the time was an independent press that seldom offered advances greater than \$10,000, I heard lots of stories from former six-figure-deal authors who'd been cast aside by their publishers for failing to earn out.

The author Marion Winik came to Seal Press in 2005 after a three-book run with Random House. Seal was able to acquire her fourth book specifically because Random House had cut her loose.

Winik was complimentary of Random House when I called her up to confirm my memory of the events surrounding her move to Seal. She told me it had done everything it could, and her take was that the success of any book is as much about luck as it is about how much the publisher gets behind it.

Maybe this is so. But publishers have many titles on a given list, with unbalanced amounts of resources and attention going to certain books over others. These days, publishers' attempts to break out particular books are inextricable from enormous advances, accompanied by the frenzy of auctions and bidding wars that result in seven-figure advances. I've only participated in two auctions, but, from the perspective of the underdog in the

bidding, it was clear that my competitors' willingness and capacity to come to the table with giant offers was the way they threw their weight around. It's also how top editors maintain their relationships with top agents, and how the industry itself maintains the status quo.

In 1997, Stephen King made news when his reported asking price for *Bag of Bones* was a jaw-dropping \$17 million. He ultimately sold the book to Simon & Schuster as part of a three-book deal for \$2 million that included 50% profit sharing. This was King's entrepreneurial solution to an issue that already-famous authors sometimes face, which is the flip side of the imbalance of publishing: when a book does really well, the publisher's gains are disproportionate to the author's. That the advance is meant to offset this issue is a flaw in the system.

Authors have no choice but to say yes to huge advances even if they understand the inherent gamble the publisher is making with their careers. I

Like beauty, merit is in the eye of the beholder—especially when it comes to fiction, a genre that's subjective by its very nature.

asked Winik if, knowing what she knows now, she would have accepted the six-figure advance that she got back in the early 1990s. "Absolutely," she said. "You have to take every chance you have in this industry."

That authors' careers have been ruined or cut short because publishers offered too much money for projects is a travesty. Setting some authors up for failure is the natural outcome of a system in which some bets win and others lose. For that reason alone, authors looking for a book deal would do well to remember that a modest advance can be a blessing and an opportunity.

While I can't imagine a world in which every aspiring author has an equal shot, I do dream of a future where the measure of a book's worth lies in readers' experience of it rather than the money that's thrown at it. ■

Brooke Warner is publisher of She Writes Press and SparkPress, a TEDx speaker, writing coach, and author of Write On, Sisters! and Green-Light Your Book.

BookLife Talks with Joseph Kazden

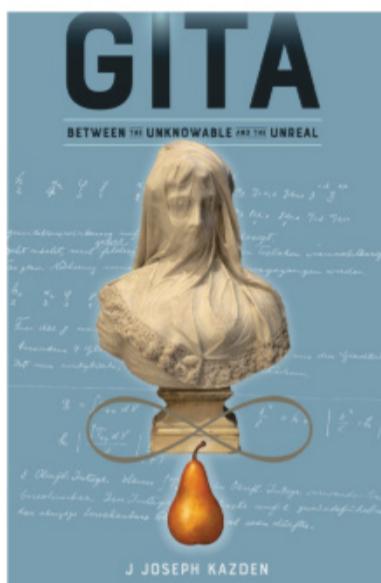
Though Kazden had already studied the *Tao Te Ching* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, the philosophical nature of his novels offered him the chance to explore both texts in even greater detail.

What's the story behind this book?

Of all the matter and energy in the universe, only biology creates an experience of reality through a bio-sensory process. That experience, which we believe to be reality, is a simulation. In *TotIs*, I examine how that simulation is in fact an illusion and acts as a veil that separates consciousness from the reality upon which that simulation is based. That reality I termed "totIs." *Gita* explores the challenges for a consciousness, such as ours, to live with such knowledge. The book's form is derived from the *Bhagavad Gita*, which deals with this challenge but was written some 2,500 years ago. Both Brahman, in the *Bhagavad Gita*, and the Tao, in the *Tao Te Ching*, describe the same conundrum for conscious beings. These two philosophical systems understood that whatever reality serves as the foundation of the universe, it cannot be experienced directly by that consciousness and can only be experienced by it as an interpretation through its senses. Most importantly, this is true for our experiences of both space and time, which consciousness believes to be absolutely real. That space and time are illusory has profound consequences for our notions of cause and effect as well as for our ideas of free will and fate. This understanding also explains the persistence that Einstein spoke of when he described reality as merely an illusion, albeit a persistent one.

Gita is the sequel to *TotIs*. Did you find the writing process easier for your second book?

It wasn't easier, but I relished the process that brought a deeper understanding of these two texts, the *Tao Te Ching* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, which have always held a special place in my life. Whereas *TotIs* took the form of a symposium led by Socrates, I began *Gita* by trying to replicate the form in the



Bhagavad Gita while adopting a more narrative style for the sake of readability. Socrates continues in this book to channel his stature as a clear and logical thinker even though he is taking the place of Krishna. Gita, of course, takes the place of Arjuna.

Both of your books contain a number of historical figures, cultures, and disciplines. What kind of research did you do to ensure accuracy when portraying them?

I have been a student of the *Tao Te Ching* as well as Buddhism and Hinduism since the early 1970s. I also studied Jung's ideas of the collective unconscious, archetypes, the psyche, and individuation. I have read extensively the works of Joseph Campbell, whose treatments of mythology reference Jung's work and expand on it in important ways. My characters and story settings are more mythical than historical, but after so many decades of delving physically as well as mentally into these cultures and philosophies, I found the characters already living within me and ready to come out. *Gita* is the result of lifelong study and research to be sure.

If you could pick anyone to give this book to, who would it be and why?

I'd give it to Yuval Harari, whose brilliant work *Sapiens* I absolutely loved. His book drew on two separate conceptions as the drivers of human history that mirror the two separate conceptions that drive physics—namely, quantum theory and relativity. These two very accurate theories each break down when they enter the other's realm. For Harari, biology is the quantum realm and culture is the relativity realm. Both are kept essentially separate in the book, but I don't think they are separate in reality. There is also the possible problem of what John Bell called "superdeterminism" stemming from the results of his theory, something Western minds rebel against viscerally.

Will there be a follow-up to *Gita*, or are you working on something different?

I'm currently working on an "interpretation" of the *Tao Te Ching*.

For more, visit booklife.com/kazden

Scouting Report

In this roundup of the best reviewed BookLife titles, we highlight a star-crossed-love story, a dystopian story collection, and goddess legends.



They Don't Make Plus Size Spacesuits

ALI THOMPSON

Synopsis: Thompson debuts with fat-phobia-themed tales.

PW's Takeaway: This is a heartfelt, empathetic collection.

Comparable Title: Virgie Tovar's *You Have the Right to Remain Fat*

Read the Review: publishers-weekly.com/9780578501383



The Lost Letter

MIMI MATTHEWS

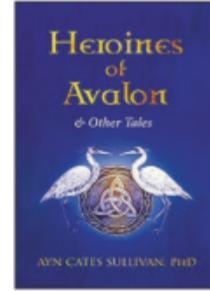
Synopsis: A soldier is separated from the woman he loves.

PW's Takeaway:

Historical romance fans will snap this one up.

Comparable Titles: Judith McNaught's Westmoreland series

Read the Review: publishers-weekly.com/9780999036402



Heroines of Avalon

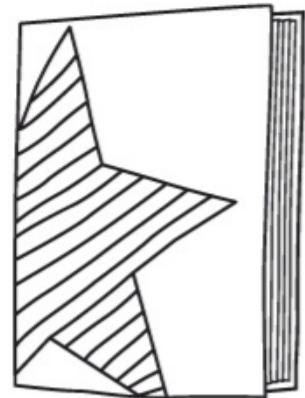
AYN CATES SULLIVAN

Synopsis: Sullivan retells tales of legendary heroines.

PW's Takeaway: A valuable, approachable guide.

Comparable Title: Nikita Gill's *Great Goddesses*

Read the Review: publishers-weekly.com/9781947925045



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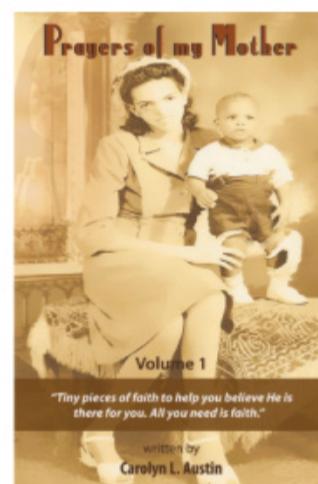


BookLife Talks with Carolyn L. Austin

Life's trials and tribulations led to Austin's debut book, *Prayers of My Mother: Volume 1*. With faith and a positive attitude, she looks to reaffirm readers relationships with God while providing encouragement and guidance through significant life-changing moments. More information is available at prayersofmymother.com.

Can you describe *Prayers of My Mother* for readers unfamiliar with it?

Prayers of My Mother: Volume I is a book filled with powerful Scriptures, relatable and poignant anecdotes, and edifying prayers. My male readers commented that it gives them present-day application for the Scriptures. *Prayers of My Mother* is designed to encourage anyone struggling with life events to have faith and believe in the power of prayer. It was written for everyone, no matter their religion or beliefs, and introduces Scriptures to those unfamiliar with the Bible. *Prayers of My Mother* also depicts



how the same flaws, mistakes, and regrets that we experience today were also experienced by people during biblical times and that the same parallel choices, rewards, and consequences still apply.

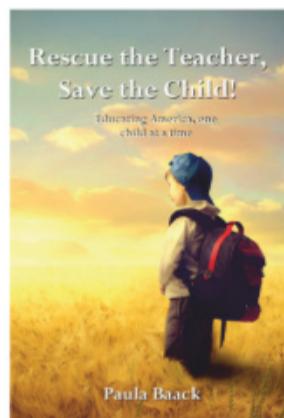
When pulling all of the material together, was there anything that you left out that you wish you could have kept in?

Yes. I did not want my first book to be too long, so I decided to split it into volumes. Volume two is almost finished! I have also begun writing another book, *Don't Eat Your Vomit!*, a concept introduced in volume one. I hope to complete both books in late 2020.

For more, visit booklife.com/austin

BookLife Talks with Paula Baack

With almost 50 years of experience in education, Baack has written *Rescue the Teacher, Save the Child*, a nonfiction work she hopes will educate readers about issues that teachers face and provide some potential solutions to problems.



make sure you are telling "the truth," or how do you refresh your memories when writing?

Over the past four decades, I daily verbalized my many teacher anecdotes and life lessons to students and colleagues. My teaching experiences vividly permeate my soul, right down to the aroma of the school, the character of the classroom environment, and the faces of the children who touched my life.

Why or how do you think this book is particularly relevant now?

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, teachers are leaving the profession at the highest rate on record. My book identifies the problems facing today's teachers. Through teachable moments and end-of-chapter questions for students, parents, teachers, and administrators, real solutions are garnered.

Why did you decide to write your memoir now?

As an educator of 46 years, I've taught more than 6,000 kindergarten-through-collegiate students in three states, 15 schools, 17 classrooms, and with 23 different administrators! Fired for helping an at-risk student in the spring of 2017, I realized that my life's purpose transitioned from educating students to empowering administrators, teachers, and parents to walk in one another's shoes.

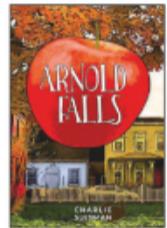
Your book covers almost 50 years. How do you

For more, visit booklife.com/baack

First Lines

Our roundup of some of the best opening lines from titles by BookLife authors

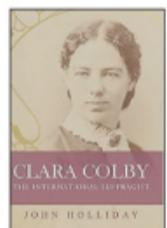
This month, we've got empty roads, Victorian romance, tango, and more. To submit a first line, email booklifeeditor@booklife.com.



Arnold Falls

CHARLIE SUISMAN

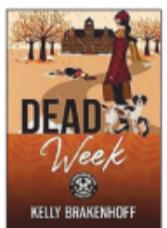
"It's a good forty minutes until sunrise and the roads of Arnold Falls are empty, except for one silver Rascal mobility scooter making its way toward the courthouse."



Clara Colby: The International Suffragist

JOHN HOLLIDAY

"We may never know why three-year-old Clara Dorothy Bewick was left behind in England when her parents and three brothers departed for a new life in America."



Dead Week: A Cassandra Sato Mystery

KELLY BRAKENHOFF

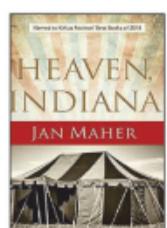
"If Cassandra Sato had to pinpoint the moment enthusiasm for her dream job faltered, it was when her weather app displayed a morning temperature of thirty-eight degrees with a projected high of forty-two."



Desperately Seeking Novelty: A Memoir about ADHD and Adaptation

SANDRA ARNAUD-DEWAR

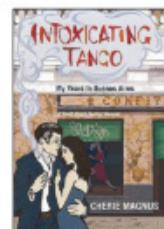
"'Is this kid on Ritalin?' demands Dr. Bailey, the gray-haired physician who will soon be performing emergency eye surgery on my six-year-old son."



Heaven, Indiana

JAN MAHER

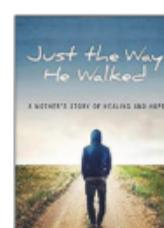
"Elephants paced restlessly, their immense feet beating slow syncopations."



Intoxicating Tango: My Years in Buenos Aires

CHERIE MAGNUS

"I should have left when he hit me; just packed up my piano music and my cat and left Buenos Aires behind me."



Just the Way He Walked: A Mother's Story of Healing and Hope

KATHLEEN POOLER

"For twenty-three years, I feared my son Brian would die from his addiction to alcohol."



The Lord Chamberlain's Daughter

RON FRITSCH

"As soon as Fortinbras learned Ophelia was still alive, he sent her a message asking if he could pay her a visit."



The Lost Letter: A Victorian Romance

MIMI MATTHEWS

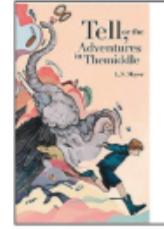
"Sylvia Stamford smoothed out the skirts of her plain, dark gray gown, as she followed her employer, Mrs. Dinwiddie, down the stairs."



Singing Out Loud

MARILEE EAVES

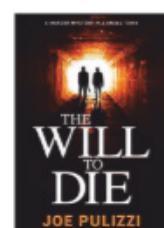
"In early spring of 1962, while I was living in a locked ward at McLean Hospital, no longer hallucinating, in therapy every day and recovering from the psychotic break that had landed me there, an attendant came to my room to tell me I had a phone call."



Tell, or the Adventures in Themiddle

L.N. MAYER

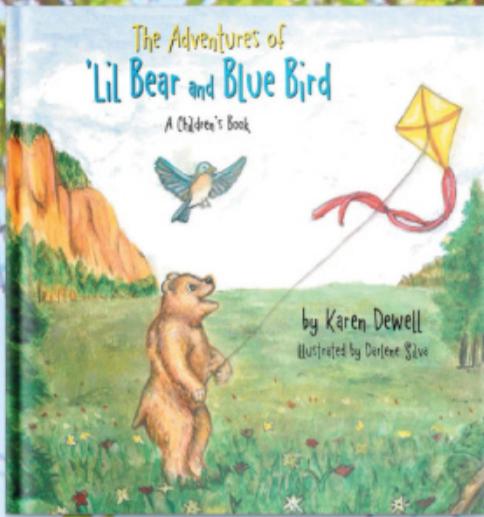
"Though few people have heard of Thepending, those who have could hardly give you directions on how to get there."



The Will to Die

JOE PULIZZI

"Besides intermittent periods of sleep and steady drinking, the PopC account consumed my life for the past three weeks."



THE ADVENTURES OF 'LIL BEAR AND BLUE BIRD A CHILDREN'S BOOK

By Karen Dewell

A bear and her cub, 'Lil Bear live in a cave near a dark forest and a meandering stream. Every day, the mama bear teaches her furry bundle of joy how to survive in the world. While 'Lil Bear learns how to forage for nuts and seeds, wash himself, and climb a tree, he soon makes a friend, Blue Bird, who begins taking him on all sorts of fun adventures.

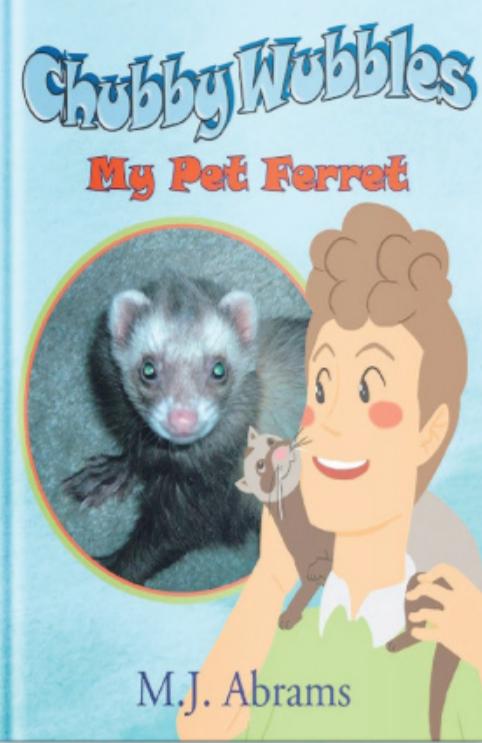
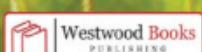
After Blue Bird becomes an important part of their family, one day he and 'Lil Bear find a kite in the woods. They have so much fun flying it that they forget to pay attention to their surroundings. As darkness falls, the friends soon realize that they are lost and alone. Now they must rely on what they have learned from Mama Bear in order to endure a long night in the woods and hopefully return home in time for the change in seasons.

In this adventurous tale for children, a young bear and his feathered friend learn many valuable lessons about adventure, survival, and most importantly, love.

KAREN DEWELL is sometimes inspired by creative dreams that transport her into imaginative lands. She currently resides in Desert Hot Springs, California. This is her debut children's book and the first installment of an intended series.

Genre: Children's Book
ISBN: 9781643614304

Available at
[amazon.com](#)



CHUBBY WUBBLES My PET FERRET

M.J. Abrams

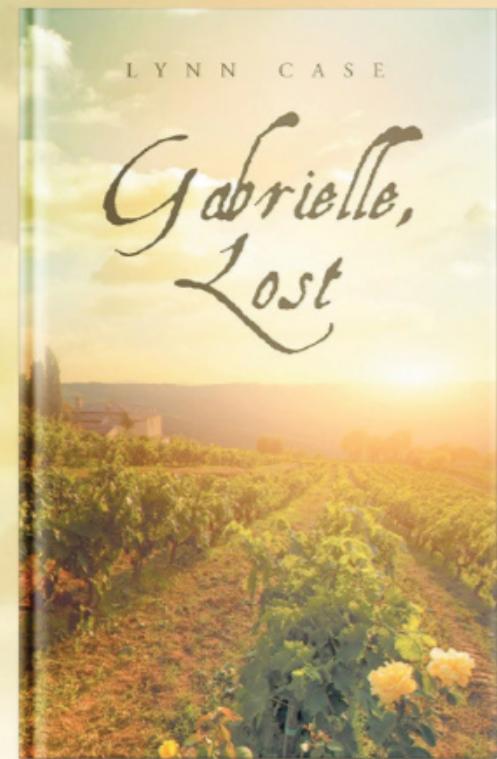
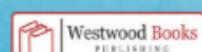
Chubby Wubbles is inspired by a true story about the friendship between a young man and a loving ferret determined to find his missing playmate Coco. There is fun, mystery, and unexpected drama in their exciting adventures together.

This book is dedicated to ferret shelters everywhere. Their hard work and dedication to finding good homes for wayward ferrets is appreciated throughout their communities.

The author of "Chubby Wubbles", Myron Abrams has been married for over 47 years. He is currently enjoying retirement after working in the automotive industry for over 40 years. Other than his passion for auctions and estate sales, his other interests include collecting antiques and memorabilia, gardening, sports, and world travel. Abrams says it was always fun to watch his son Jeffrey and his pet ferrets interact and play with each other whenever he visited them. Because of the many experiences his son has had with these adorably sweet animals, he could perceive an interesting story developing. He decided to write a children's book based on their adventures and misadventures together. This book is a way for parents and children to gain insight into how ferrets interact with others. When you read this children's story, you'll understand why ferrets are furry little bundles of joy that make great pets.

Genre: Children's Book
ISBN # : 978-1643618722

Available at
[amazon.com](#)



GABRIELLE, LOST

LYNN CASE

Gabrielle Grimaldi, the former party girl from Fears Revenge, thought she had finally found the right man, Frank, to settle down with. Her career in the fashion world was beginning to take off.

That is, until she gets the opportunity to do some training in Italy and meets Giada Rosso, a wild Italian, fast driving, hot tempered fashion house maverick that would be her trainer. The two women have an instant connection. Then Gabrielle meets Antonio, Gia's brother and tensions begin to rise between the three of them. She finds herself reverting back to her wilder ways.

Gabrielle soon discovers that her new found friends have a questionable family business on the dark side of the law. She soon discovers shipments in the family vineyard wine bottles hidden amongst fabrics for the fashion house.

Soon she must decide between her boyfriend in America and her new friends in Italy. Confusion and tension rise as emotions continue to run high as kidnapping and sexual encounters ensue.

Gabrielle then learns the connection between her boyfriend and her new friends in Italy.

LYNN CASE was born in Baytown, Texas not far from Houston. A southern girl at heart, she has lived most of her life in California.

When not traveling around the country Lynn and her husband, who met in high school and now have two grown children, enjoy their home base, Reno, Nevada. When they are home, she enjoys her favorite past time, cooking. Lynn enjoys being surrounded by family and cooking for everyone.

Writing short stories while growing up, being a private person, Lynn never shared her writings, even with close friends and family. She was strongly encouraged to publish her first novel, Fear's Revenge in 2013.

Gabrielle, lost is the third novel Lynn has released to the public. Fears Revenge, in 2013, was the first. Then her second novel, Return to Lily Cove, in 2014. Then her 4th novel Feathers in the Wind in 2016.

ISBN # : 978-1643614090

Available at
[amazon.com](#)

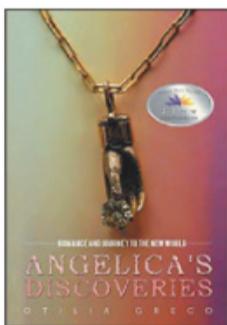




New Titles from Self-Publishers

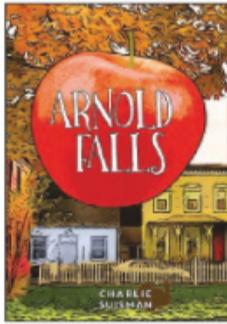
Booksellers, publishers, librarians, and agents are encouraged to look at the 52 self-published titles below. Each appears with a list of retailers that are selling the book and a description provided by its author. Some of these writers are waiting to be discovered; others have track records and followings and are doing it on their own. If you are a self-published author interested in listing titles in this section, please visit publishersweekly.com/pw-select for more information.

Fiction



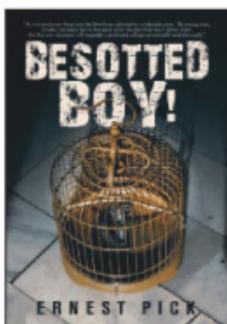
Angelica's Discoveries: Romance and Journey to the New World
Otilia Greco. Westwood Books Publishing. \$7.99 paper (178p), ISBN 978-1-64361-544-8
Amazon, BN.com

When Angelica's heart leads her in a new direction, she must bravely face her fear once again as she embarks on a challenging adventure to the New World, where her true destiny awaits.



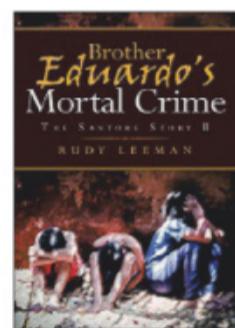
Arnold Falls
Charlie Suisman. Bowker. \$5.99 e-book, ASIN B084HHSCSW
Amazon
Spend time in the oddball village of Arnold Falls, where

larger-than-life characters deal with the smallest of problems. Somehow it all comes out right in the end.



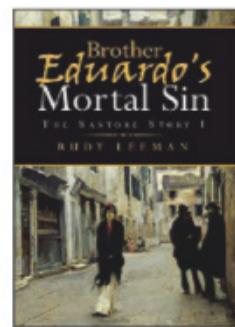
Besotted Boy!
Ernest Pick. iUniverse. \$13.99 paper (218p), ISBN 978-1-5320-8019-7; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-5320-8020-3
Amazon
Lacking a personality

of his own, Freddie attempts to siphon off that of his idol, film director Cephas Varte. Varte's wife, protective of her man, intervenes. Their conflict leads to a totally unexpected conclusion.



Brother Eduardo's Mortal Crime (The Santore Story #2)
Rudy Leeman. Book Vine Press. \$8.99 paper (252p), ISBN 978-1-951886-94-3
Amazon, BN.com

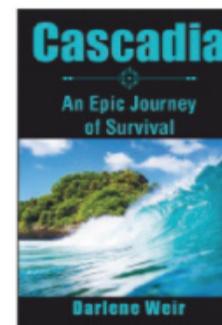
From the discovery of mutilated children's bodies in a farmer's field to chasing smugglers in the Crimean War arena, Inspector Eduardo and his partner, Rai, face terror in a race to save stolen children delivered to Italy and their capital of Florence.



Brother Eduardo's Mortal Sin (The Santore Story #1)
Rudy Leeman. Book Vine Press. \$8.99 paper (213p), ISBN 978-1-951886-91-2
Amazon, BN.com

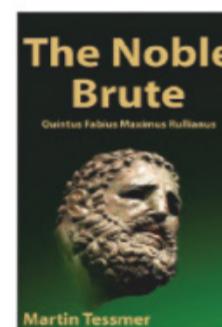
Readers follow Eduardo Santore's life as they're drawn into the patriarchal culture of 19th-century Italy as it struggles to become one nation.

Cascadia: An Epic Journey of Survival



Cascadia: An Epic Journey of Survival
Darlene Weir. Xlibris. \$19.99 paper (288p), ISBN 978-1-5434-6763-5; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-5434-6764-2
Amazon
Set in British Columbia, this is a fictional account of a serious earthquake that is predicted for some point in the future.

The Noble Brute: Quintus Fabius Maximus Rullianus



The Noble Brute: Quintus Fabius Maximus Rullianus
Martin Tessmer. Dancing in Chains. \$4.99 e-book, ASIN B083XVDP31
Amazon
Two hundred years before Caesar, the Brute ruled Rome.

Quintus Fabius battles the dread Samnites, developing the weaponry and tactics that make Rome the ruler of the world.



The Old Stories
David Selcer. Biblio Publishing. \$13.95 paper (234p), ISBN 978-1-62249-479-8
Amazon
A Jew deserts the Russian navy during war with Japan and later leaves America

"A children's tale full of loopy, good-hearted energy—a fun read."

—Kirkus Reviews

ALIENS, LADYBUGS, AND THE LETHAL VIRUS



By HILDA L. TREVINO

Cover Art by AC Canales

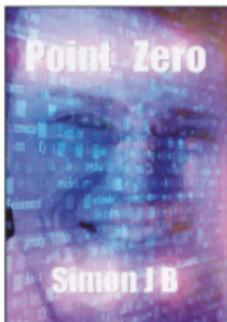
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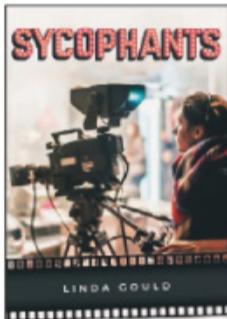
Pages: 210

to help Holocaust survivors get to Palestine for moral reasons he's learned from the kabbalah.

**Point Zero**

Simon JB. Simon Bennett. \$5.24 e-book, ISBN 978-1-66156-247-2 Amazon

Some youthful professors and bohemian types challenge the existence of dark energy and the big bang theory, while taking the reader on a lighthearted excursion into their world of gaiety and mayhem.

**Sycophants**

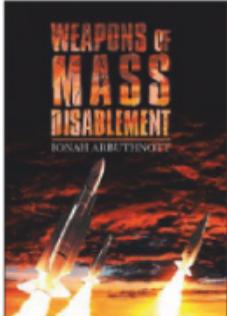
Linda Gould. Linda Gould. \$10.65 paper (284p), ISBN 978-1-79087-417-0 Amazon

Imogene, a country girl with stars in her eyes, moves to New York City after college to work for her former roommate, Sara, who has established a film production company.

**Veil of Secrecy**

Margaret Franceschini. Page Publishing. \$15.87 paper (166p), ISBN 978-1-64544-080-2 Amazon

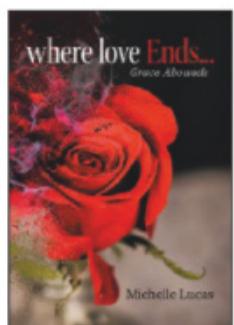
Julie is an ambitious young woman who follows her dreams in becoming a journalist while trying to avoid past mistakes in love that haunt her and her daughter.

Weapons of Mass Disablement

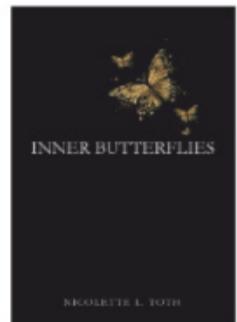
Jonah Arbuthnott. Xlibris. \$30 paper (241p), ISBN 978-1-79600-212-6 Amazon, BN.com, Xlibris.com

A heroic woman is involved in an urgent secret mission to save Israel from imminent destruction and genocide by Iran's huge arsenal of guided missiles.

Where Love Ends... Grace Abounds

 Michelle Lucas. Xlibris. \$19.99 paper (326p), ISBN 978-1-984568-03-8; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-984568-02-1 Amazon

A preacher's kid finds love in all the wrong places. Can she be saved? Can love win in this spiritual warfare? Or is it too late?

Poetry**Inner Butterflies**

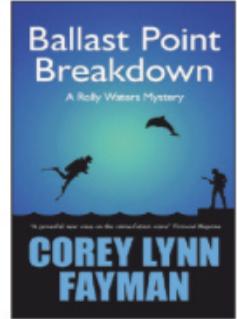
Nicolette L. Toth. AuthorHouse. \$13.99 paper (126p), ISBN 978-1-72832-254-4; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-72832-253-7 Amazon

Toth's collection contains poetry about the sour, the savory, and the sweet things in her life.

**Moments in Time: A Collection of Poems**

Fred Lewis. Fred T. Lewis Publisher. \$19.99 paper (216p), ISBN 978-1-948828-86-4 Amazon, BN.com

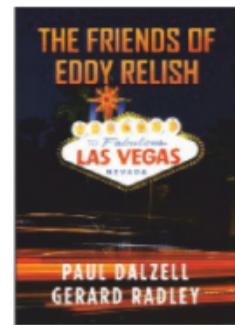
Many of Lewis's poems were based on life experiences and others were drawn from inspiration.

Mystery/Thriller**Ballast Point Breakdown: A Rolly Waters Mystery**

Corey Lynn Fayman. Konstellation Press. \$14.95 paper (352p), ISBN 978-0-9991989-8-8; \$2.99 e-book, ASIN B084P4JT47 Amazon, BN.com, Books-a-Million

Guitar-playing gumshoe Rolly Waters links a friend's death to surf punks, Navy SEALs, animal rights activists, a secret dolphin-training program, and one seriously dysfunctional family.

The Friends of Eddy Relish

 Paul Dalzell and Gerard Radley. AuthorHouse. \$20.99 paper (284p), ISBN 978-1-72830-793-0; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-72830-792-3 Amazon

Failed Hollywood actor Eddy Relish falls into the hands of Bible-quoting gangster Bill Blake and must become a drug mule. Eddy is also menaced by a superspy turned Islamic terrorist.

**The Girl in Cabin 13 (Emma Griffin FBI Mystery #1)**

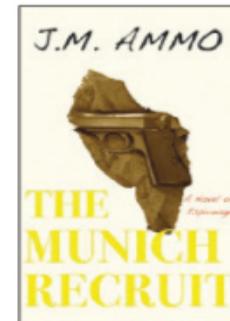
A.J. Rivers. A.J. Rivers. \$12.99 paper (268p), ISBN 978-1-65830-685-0; \$3.99 e-book, ASIN B0833JCPH5

Amazon, BN.com, Books-a-Million When Emma finds a dead body on her porch with her name written on the man's hand, she uncovers a sinister clue to the mystery that has haunted her since childhood.

**Johnny Set Go**

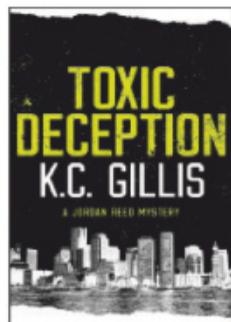
Rob Edwards. Kobo. \$9.99 e-book, ISBN 978-0-648-78880-5 Kobo

Johnny is born in an idyllic saltwater bay, though the city life coaxes him out. Exposed, he seeks to protect his father, support his mother, and create his own life.

**The Munich Recruit: A Novel of Espionage**

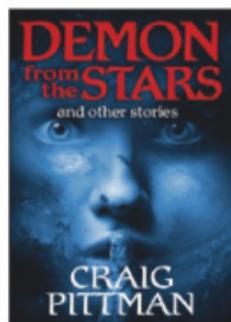
J.M. Ammo. KDP. \$7.99 paper (181p), ISBN 978-1-08-599343-2 Jmammo.com, Amazon A former MI6 agent attempts to deliver a dossier to NATO about Russia's attempts to destabilize Western democracy, and a former U.S. biathlete gets tied up in the action.

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**Toxic Deception: A Jordan Reed Mystery**

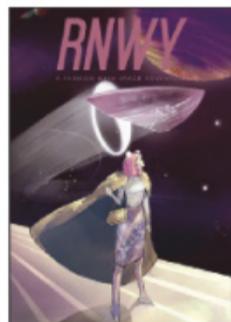
K.C. Gillis. Chesterfield Press. 99¢ e-book, ASIN B083BK4JB2 Amazon, Apple iBooks, BN.com, Kobo

While investigating a strange death, a young journalist is forced to face off against a corrupt biotech company.

SF/Fantasy/Horror**Demon from the Stars and Other Stories**

Craig Pittman. Ashram-Uria. \$10.99 paper (200p), ISBN 978-1-79867-163-4; \$2.99 e-book, ASIN B084Z78B1T Amazon

Three very different stories—a sci-fi horror story, a fantasy adventure, and a zombie apocalypse drama—all in one book.

RNWY: A Space Adventure

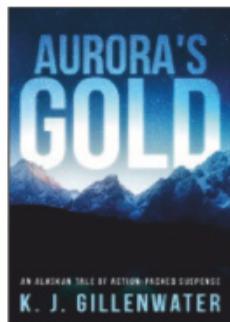
P.A. Lopez. RNWY. \$16.99 paper (492p), ISBN 978-1-69339-739-4 Amazon

In the year 2399, an antisocial fashion editor and a frustrated supermodel/reality star must save the solar system from an alien invasion. Alien invasion? Worst Fashion Week ever.

The Sigil: A Novel

Shakeil Kanish and Larissa Mandeville. Shakeil Kanish. \$9.99 paper (342p), ISBN 978-1-73446-060-5; \$2.99 e-book, ASIN B0849SR7M2 Amazon

After losing the person most important to him, Lake Smithson stumbles across a letter that thrusts him into a world that threatens to destroy all he has left.

Romance/Erotica**Aurora's Gold**

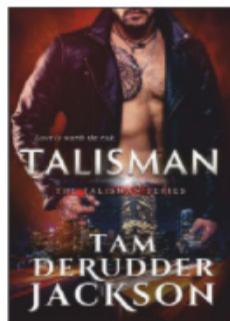
K.J. Gillenwater. K.J. Gillenwater. \$5.99 e-book, ASIN B07YL6X9RG Amazon, Apple iBooks, Baker & Taylor, BN.com, Google Play, Kobo

A female underwater dredge miner in Nome, Alaska, must hire a possible murderer to save her family business.

**It's Not PMS, It's You**

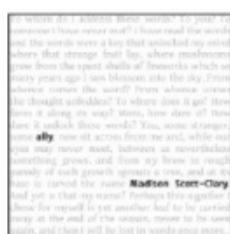
Rich Amooi. Rich Amooi. \$2.99 e-book, ASIN B07YQ7WZTJ Amazon

Ruth "Ruthless" Harper is on track to be managing partner at her all-male consulting firm. Nothing will stand in her way. A near-death experience and a public wedgie change everything.

**Talisman**

Tam DeRudder Jackson. Warrior Romance Press. \$14.99 paper (338p), ISBN 978-1-73426-660-3; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-73426-661-0 Amazon

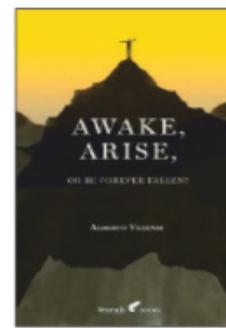
With time running out, a modern-day Celtic warrior must convince a skeptical woman that she's his talisman and that their union is the key to ending a centuries-old curse on warriors.

Nonfiction**Ally**

Madison Scott-Clary. Madison Scott-Clary. \$35 paper (474p), ISBN 978-1-948743-15-0 Ally.id/book

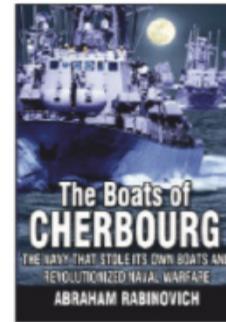
An ergodic, arborescent, semiautobiographical work about identity, mental health, spirituality, and the mutability of the past.

Awake, Arise, or Be Forever Fallen! Fall, Awakening, and Rise of a Young

**Anorexic Male**

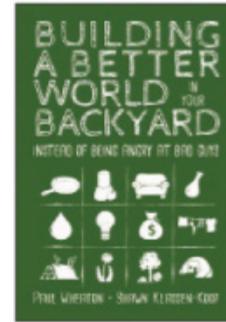
Alberto Vezendi. Vezendi Books. \$9.95 paper (124p), ISBN 978-2-88961-003-7; \$2.99 e-book, ISBN 978-2-88961-006-8 Amazon, Google Play, IngramSpark, Kobo

Filled with hope and inspiration, this is an account of the trials and tribulations of a young anorexic male in his journey from self-destruction to self-actualization.

The Boats of Cherbourg: The Navy that Stole Its Own Boats and Revolutionized Naval Warfare**Naval Warfare**

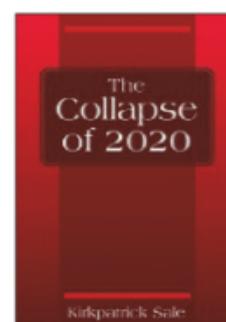
Abraham Rabinovich. Primary Publishing. \$16.99 paper (354p), ISBN 978-1-71020-421-6 Amazon

Israeli sailors infiltrate a French port and escape with embargoed missile boats. The creation of the first-ever missile boat revolutionized naval warfare, and Rabinovich explores it here.

Building a Better World in Your Backyard—Instead of Being Angry at Bad Guys**Bad Guys**

Paul Wheaton and Shawn Klassen-Koop. Paul Wheaton. \$18 paper (165p), ISBN 978-1-991714-0-7 Permies.com/bwb

The authors give lessons on the luxuriant environmentalism that readers can do from their own homes, allowing them to prioritize comfort over sacrifice while potentially saving thousands of dollars.

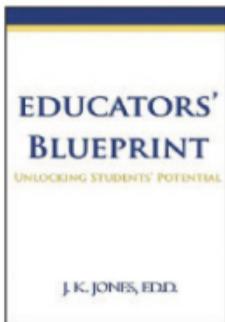
**Collapse of 2020**

Kirkpatrick Sale. Outskirts Press. \$9.95 paper (57p), ISBN 978-1-977221-77-3 Amazon, BN.com, Outskirtspress.com Sale gives his case for



the dangers that this world faces now and the real possibility of the imminent collapse of civilization.

Educators' Blueprint: Unlocking Students' Potential



J.K. Jones. Fascinare. \$16.95 paper (276p), ISBN 978-0-9828946-7-5; \$5.99 e-book, ASIN B0842B1PJN Amazon

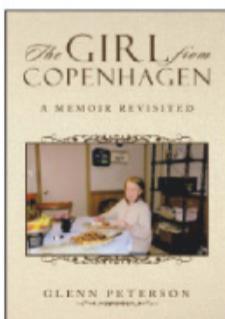
Jones presents a plan to dispel flawed educational practices and enlighten educators' thoughts, ideas, and approach to teaching.



Mark Unger. Mark Unger. \$4.99 e-book, ASIN B078YXXTMC Amazon

One family's tireless search for answers saved their son and others from a rare form of pediatric cancer.

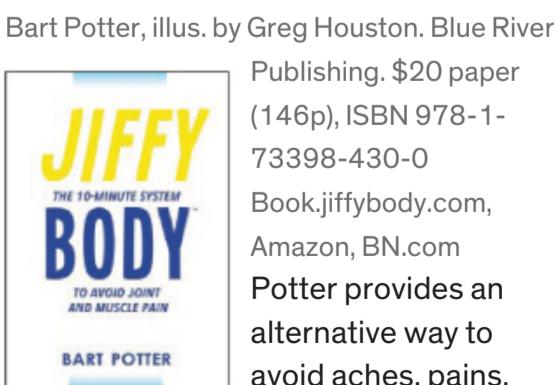
The Girl from Copenhagen:



Glenn Peterson. Xlibris. \$19.99 paper (134p), ISBN 978-1-79606-636-4; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-79606-634-0 Amazon

This sequel to *The Girl from Copenhagen* shares more memories Peterson had of his mother, Inge Buus, and her well-lived life.

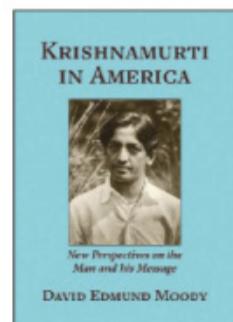
Jiffy Body: The 10-Minute System to Avoid Joint and Muscle Pain



Bart Potter, illus. by Greg Houston. Blue River Publishing. \$20 paper (146p), ISBN 978-1-73398-430-0 Book.jiffybody.com, Amazon, BN.com Potter provides an alternative way to avoid aches, pains,

stiffness, swelling, nerve impingement, and joint problems with this 10-minute daily system.

Krishnamurti in America: New Perspectives on the Man and His Message



David Edmund Moody. Alpha Centauri Press. \$24.95 paper (354p), ISBN 978-1-73422-782-6 Amazon

The first biography that tells the complete story of Krishnamurti's life in America—a story of love and betrayal, lawsuits and enlightenment, passion and transcendence.

The Last Trial of T. Boone Pickens

Chrysta Castañeda and Loren C. Steffy. Stoney Creek Publishing Group. \$34.95 hardcover (300p), ISBN 978-1-73408-220-3 Amazon, BN.com, Books-a-Million, Tamupress.com

A high-stakes courtroom drama involving the legendary oil tycoon, told through the eyes of the attorney who represented him.

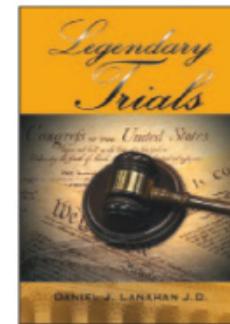
Leeds, Money, and Misery Me: Twenty Years of Hurt, 23 Mistakes and the Tale of Toma

Dave Tomlinson. AuthorHouse. \$27.32 paper (596p), ISBN 978-1-72839-393-3; \$4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-72839-392-6 Amazon

Blind ambition and financial blunders drove the Leeds United Football Club to the brink of extinction. Tomlinson explores how the most committed fans in Europe were let down by the powerful men who abused their trust.

Legendary Trials

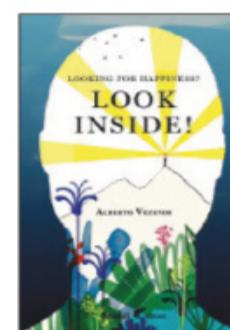
Daniel J. Lanahan. AuthorHouse. \$13.99 paper (222p), ISBN 978-1-72830-224-9;



\$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-72830-223-2 Amazon

Lanahan captures the essence of certain trials in American history, including the previous presidential impeachment trials.

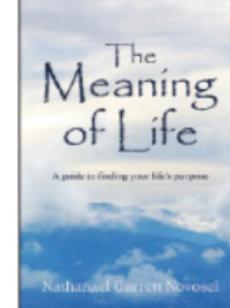
Looking for Happiness? Look Inside! A Farewell to Anxiety



Alberto Vezendi. Vezendi Books. \$9.97 paper (146p), ISBN 978-2-88961-011-2; \$2.99 e-book, ISBN 978-2-88961-014-3 Amazon, Google Play, IngramSpark, Kobo

In this self-help work, Vezendi argues that readers already have the ability to overcome the two main obstacles to happiness: attachment and anxiety. They just need to look inside themselves.

The Meaning of Life: A Guide to Finding Your Life's Purpose

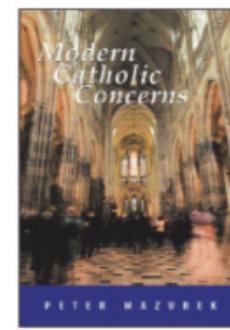


Nathanael Garrett Novosel. Nathanael Garrett Novosel. \$29.95 hardcover (358p), ISBN 978-1-948220-00-2; \$9.99 e-book, ASIN B082RHWM63

Amazon, Apple iBooks, BN.com, Books-a-Million

How to think about life, not how to live it. Garrett dissects how humans derive meaning into components that can help readers make their own life meaningful.

Modern Catholic Concerns



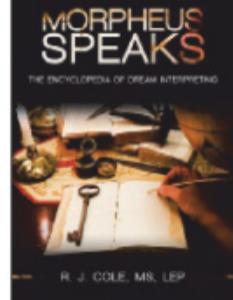
Peter Mazurek. Xlibris. \$27.59 paper (620p), ISBN 978-1-79600-576-9; \$4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-79600-577-6 Amazon

Mazurek reviews selected evidence for and against the proposition of God's existence and the

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divinity of Jesus with an assessment of the persuasive value of this evidence.

Morpheus Speaks: The Encyclopedia of Dream Interpreting



R.J. Cole. iUniverse. \$39.99 paper (602p), ISBN 978-1-5320-7006-8; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-5320-7007-5 Amazon

Dreams represent the truth of who people are, their best self, and truths they don't always want to face. With this dream decoder, readers will have a chance to understand the truths of themselves.

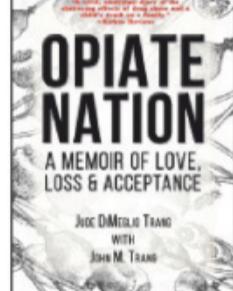
New Yorkers: A Feisty People Who Will Unsettle, Madden, Amuse and Astonish You



Clifford Browder. Browder Books. \$19.95 paper (352p), ISBN 978-1-73337-820-8 Amazon

A quirky memoir by a longtime resident with glances at New York City's history and weird facts that will surprise visitors and residents alike.

Opiate Nation: A Memoir of Love, Loss & Acceptance

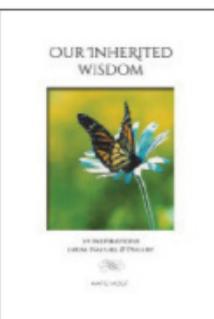


Jude DiMeglio Trang, with John M. Trang. Gowor International Publishing. \$29.99 hardcover (305p), ISBN 978-0-648-58853-5 Amazon, IngramSpark

A memoir of the devastating effects of drug abuse on a family and of a child's death from overdose. A clear, honest, and vivid account of the perilous world of addiction.

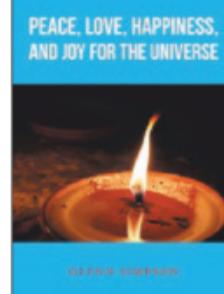
Our Inherited Wisdom: 54 Inspirations from Nature and Poetry

Kate Vogt. IngramSpark. \$29 paper (356p), ISBN 978-1-73318-192-1 Amazon



Vogt invites readers to find divine intelligence in their most ordinary moments and encounters, to slow down and reset their hearts.

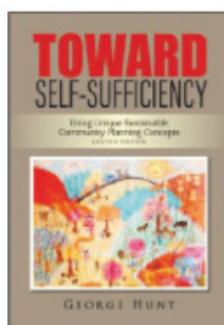
Peace, Love, Happiness, and Joy for the Universe



Glenn Simpson. AuthorHouse. \$13.99 paper (120p), ISBN 978-1-5462-7491-9; \$3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-5462-7492-6 Amazon

Simpson aims to achieve world peace by preaching nonviolence (except in self-defense) by way of a new world government (prophesied in many religions).

Toward Self-Sufficiency from Chaos: Using Unique Sustainable Community Planning Concepts



George Hunt. Fresh Pages Media & Advertising. \$20.99 paper (306p), ISBN 978-1-951933-19-7 Amazon

This book is intended to educate readers on understanding the dynamics that hold society back from achieving self-sufficiency.

Whatever Comes My Way: Travels in the Netherlands



Roger Gaess. Aurora Editions. \$14.99 paper (238p), ISBN 978-1-70071-447-3 Amazon

Gaess's offbeat travels around the Netherlands introduce him to oddities, strangeness, the absurd, and seeing what the people there were all about, but Gaess is always open to chance.

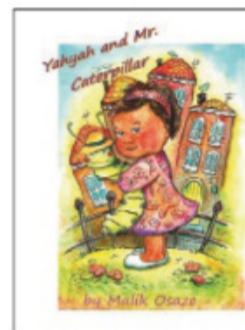
Children's/YA

The Dance Centre Presents Giselle



paper (231p), ISBN 978-1-73414-230-3 Amazon, BN.com, IngramSpark When the prima ballerina mysteriously vanishes, Randi unexpectedly lands the lead and learns that the world of ballet is not always as glamorous as it appears onstage.

Yahyah and Mister Caterpillar



Malik Osaze, illus. by Laura Smerdele. Ascension PFA. \$9.49 paper (27p), ISBN 978-1-65828-239-0 Amazon A young girl's journey as she learns new things in her environment. ■

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MYSTERY/THRILLER

The Astrologer's Curse

Arunesh Choubey |

Arunesh Choubey

212 pages, e-book, \$2.95, ISBN 978-1-70594-

621-3

Australian author Choubey (*The Migrant*) paints a bleak portrait of the dangers of obsession in this muddled novel. The book opens with Dr. Walter West celebrating a triumph with colleagues at the Mind Experiments Corporation, which builds machines that can share and alter consciousness and memory. Then Walter is hit by a truck and glimpses a man who carries a blue diamond. The rest of the book covers the events of the preceding five days. Indian schoolteacher Bhanu Roy travels to a remote island and meets Spanish actress Camila, Malian general Mali, Iranian wrestler Farhad, and Russian oligarch Pushkin. All have fled scandals in daring escapes, and all believe the island houses a magical blue diamond that can make their dreams come true. Together and separately, they embark on a desperate search.

This concept is promising, but the execution makes it challenging to follow. The point of view changes from one sentence to the next, making it difficult to really get to know the characters. The narration dispassionately describes reactions ("Mali's face

displayed a look of shock and regret"), which does little to build a connection between the reader and the characters. When danger threatens, it's hard to get excited about it. The timeline jumps around, and it's not always clear whether events are dreams, fantasies, or reality.

Readers who persevere will be pleased with a philosophical section near the end of the book that explores the nature of the self. Unfortunately, the final revelations about MEC's experiments come out of nowhere and fall flat. The glimmers of intriguing philosophy are hidden beneath a slippery story that, like Roy's quest, offers much challenge and little reward.

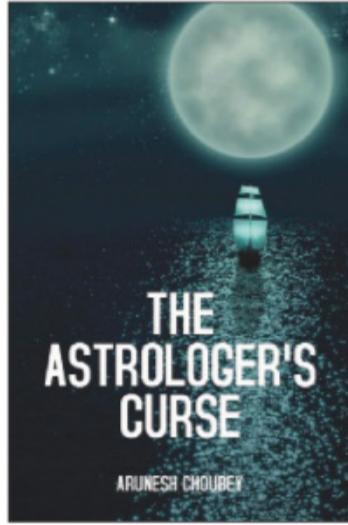
Philosophical readers may appreciate this discursive thriller, which pivots around concepts of the self.

Great for fans of

Dennis Lehane's *Shutter Island*, Hanya Yanagihara's *The People in the Trees*.

Production grades

Cover:	A-
Design & typography:	C
Illustrations:	-
Editing:	C
Marketing copy:	C



MYSTERY/THRILLER

House of the Shrieking Woman (Sarah Greene Mysteries #2)

Steven Ramirez | Glass Highway

382 pages, e-book, \$5.99, ISBN 978-1-949108-04-0

Ramirez's second Sarah Greene Mystery builds on *The Girl in the Mirror* by expanding the world of his spunky sleuth. Sarah, a divorced realtor and psychic living in Dos Santos, Calif., is recovering from a supernatural near-death experience that's left her shaken and grateful to be alive. She tries to take it easy, if taking it easy means going to therapy, sorting out her complicated relationship with her ex-husband, and trying yoga. When she learns of odd things happening at the women's shelter, she investigates. Along with her friend Carter, a fellow psychic; Lou, the town's chief of police; and a few new partners, Sarah learns more about her community, her history, and the darkness surrounding Dos Santos.

Ramirez's characters are relatable and flawed, and his approach to small Dos Santos makes readers feel like they live there too. Several characters are devoutly Catholic, and faith plays an important role in the story, but there's also casual sex, regular drinking, and an open attitude toward other forms of spirituality. The inter-

This California-set supernatural investigation is perfect for readers who like their mysteries modern, suspenseful, and warm-hearted.

Great for fans of

Victoria Laurie, Juliet Blackwell.

Production grades

Cover:	B-
Design & typography:	A
Illustrations:	-
Editing:	C+
Marketing copy:	A-



FICTION

The Ghosts of Hawthorn, Missouri

James Peet | Persimmon

204 pages, trade paper, \$10.99, ISBN 978-1-64467-051-4

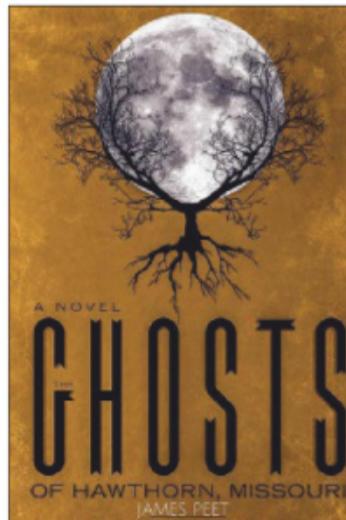
In Peet's staggering debut novel, a series of portraits bursts from the page, showcasing bigotry, cult mentality, and cycles of misery in small-town America. The story begins in the early 20th century in the rundown section of Hawthorn, Mo., that's crudely known as Jackass Flats. Nine-year-old Terrance Haight, the only black boy in Hawthorn, learns to harden himself to the white townspeople's cruelty. In adulthood, his hopes of becoming a music teacher are dashed when a white teen claims she's been having an affair with him. Meanwhile, local Baptist pastor Harold Redmond positions himself as one of the most powerful men in the region, though he doesn't practice what he preaches. As Hawthorn lurches into the 21st century, the narrative turns to follow two very different young men: Daniel, whose troubled family force him to become "a fully-grown soul trapped inside a small boy's frame," and Father Redmond's erratic and dangerous son, Eric.

Peet displays a breathtaking gift for weaving stories together, hopping effortlessly from one perspective to another without ever confusing the reader. Side characters spring to life, including Daniel's mother, Shelly, desperate to make something of herself and doomed to fail, and Mrs. Redmond, who wants to celebrate her husband's death with a parade. Peet poetically binds the ensemble together through effortless shifts in time ("He turned 25. He turned around twice, his father died, and then he was 26. He blinked. 27") and distinctive prose that gives the reader a sense of looking at the town through a magnifying glass.

Fans of unsettling drama and deeply emotional histories will be bowled over by this gritty and brilliant Midwestern gothic novel.

Great for fans of

Toni Morrison, John Steinbeck.

Production gradesCover: **B**Design & typography: **A**Illustrations: **-**Editing: **A**Marketing copy: **A**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

Burning Justice

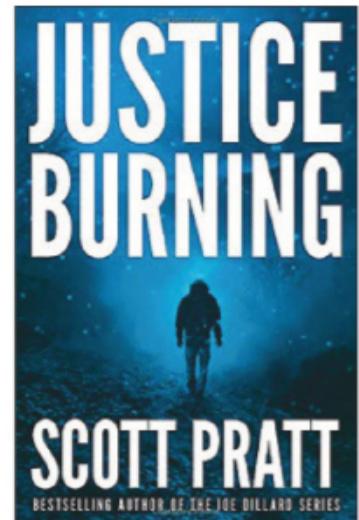
Marti Green | Yankee Clipper

294 pages, trade paper, \$9.99, ISBN 978-0-9881980-4-3

An attorney's quest to overturn a woman's death penalty conviction leads to an uphill battle in Green's gripping sixth Innocent Prisoners Project legal thriller (after *Justice Delayed*). Dani Trumball moves from Bronxville, N.Y., to Stanford, Calif., with her husband, Doug, and children, Ruth and Jonah, after Doug gets a job as dean of Stanford Law School. Dani, an attorney for the Help Innocent Prisoners Project (HIPP), takes the case of Becky Whitlaw, a woman on death row in Texas. After Becky's three young children died in a suspicious fire, she was convicted of murder. Dani files multiple appeals and searches for evidence that the fire was accidental, but the courts continue to rule against Becky, sometimes with apparent political motivation. When Doug becomes ill, Dani has to juggle her work with guiding her family through a harrowing time.

Readers will appreciate Green's sympathetic portrayal of Dani as a wife, mother, attorney, and advocate who's trying to devote sufficient time and energy to every aspect of her life. Even when Dani's feelings and struggles are highlighted, the depths of her personality remain hidden. Her stoic persona is essential to her functioning both at work and at home, but the reader is never allowed to see all the way behind the mask. However, the characterization is sufficient to carry the narrative, and series readers may gain more of an understanding of Dani's psyche over time.

This gripping legal thriller about saving an innocent woman from execution will draw fans of capable, compassionate heroines.

Great for fans ofScott Turow's *Innocent*,
John Grisham's *The Guardians*.**Production grades**Cover: **B**Design & typography: **B**Illustrations: **-**Editing: **B**Marketing copy: **B-**

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

RNWY (RNWY Universe #1)

P.A. Lopez | P.A. Lopez

489 pages, \$6.99, e-book, ISBN 978-1-69339-739-4

Lopez's clever first RNWY Universe social satire is science fiction for the social media age. In 2399, celebrity can be created or destroyed in a flash, thanks to cancel culture, superficiality, and short attention spans. Social indexes such as Super-Ping display how many billions saw and reacted to a pithy phrase or photo, with instant effects on an influencer's popularity. At Fashion Week, which is now interplanetary, reality TV star Samantha is trying to boost her falling numbers, while fashion icon Pablo, the 336-year-old father of sentient artificial intelligence, is making a rare appearance. Both of them also happen to be brilliant scientists, and when they discover a scheme involving the leader of a death cult, an AI with a grudge, and an alien race, they team up to save the day.

Thorough worldbuilding, brisk storytelling, plenty of visual details (and a handful of glossy but static digital illustrations), and an expansive plot make this splashy adventure perfectly geared to a miniseries adaptation. There's a fine line between a fast-paced story and one that is frenetic, and Lopez sometimes has a few too many plot lines going at once, but readers who identify with the stimulus-hungry dopamine fiends of the RNWY universe will have no trouble keeping up.

The protagonists are the story's beating heart. Samantha is

Anyone immersed in pop culture and social media will enjoy this witty send-up of contemporary celebrity trends.

Great for fans of

Hank Green's *An Absolutely Remarkable Thing*, Catherynne M. Valente's Space Opera.

Production grades

Cover:	B+
Design & typography:	B
Illustrations:	B
Editing:	B
Marketing copy:	B+



SF/FANTASY/HORROR

The Arena (The Shadow Epics #1)

R.B. Ellis | Mage

400 pages, e-book, 99¢, ASIN B082H3RP8Q

In this blood-soaked fantasy, a professional gladiator seeks fame and glory in the arena, only to be drawn into the deadly machinations of the most powerful people in the city. After achieving the prestigious rank of champion, Cael has finally realized his dream, but he's also come to the attention of the sadistic Chancellor Rovert Orik, who sees him as a target to be broken and destroyed. Meanwhile, Orik's wife, Valeina, pursues her own agenda, seeking long-hidden knowledge regarding the uncharted lands beyond the city of Yddinas, and her schemes soon draw in Cael's disgruntled younger brother, Breilyn. Cael and everyone he loves are caught in the crossfire and must decide where the path of righteousness lies.

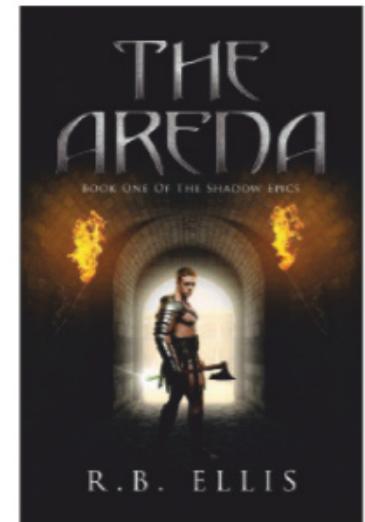
Right from the start, Ellis grabs his audience with visceral descriptions of gory combat, depicting Cael as an experienced, merciless warrior who subscribes to a rigorous code of conduct and honor. Unfortunately, Ellis never fully explores the underpinnings of this society or the larger world, leaving the reader with many questions. The existence of a non-human race actively influencing Yddinas through religion is left somewhat nebulous, clearly setting up plot lines for future installments.

Despite the epic scope of this story, it suffers from slow pacing and a lack of a clear plot in the early chapters as scenes from multiple perspectives set numerous elements into motion. Orik is so over the top with his sadism and brutality

This adventure will appeal to readers seeking a mixture of bloody violence and courtly intrigue.

Great for fans of

Joe Abercrombie's First Law trilogy, Matthew Woodring Stover's Acts of Caine series.

**Production grades**

Cover:	B+
Design & typography:	B
Illustrations:	-
Editing:	B
Marketing copy:	B-

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

Confessions from the Consortium of Rogue Gene Scientists**Charles and Cassandra Doe |**

Charles and Cassandra Doe

35 pages, e-book, \$1.37, ASIN B0829F1QBM

This provocative short story takes the form of a letter written by "Charles" and "Cassandra," scientists who violated a ban on genetic engineering so as to protect their descendants from inherited disease.

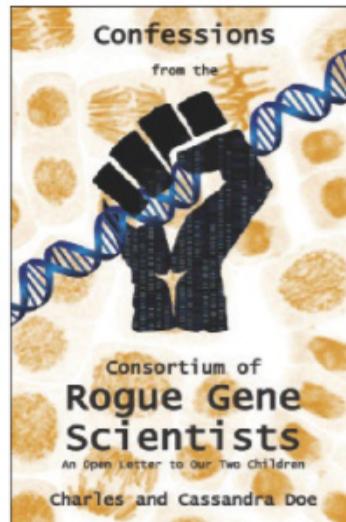
In 2017, Cassandra dies of cystic fibrosis; in 2019, Charles has a fatal cranial hemorrhage resulting from hemophilia. This missive to their orphaned children is then released anonymously to the public. Cassandra and Charles believe their genetic flaws uniquely qualified them to illustrate that using science to extend the lives of the disabled does humankind no evolutionary favors; they hope their children, engineered to be "physically, mentally, and emotionally healthier," will help the human race grow stronger over time by handing down the healthy genes from their parents as well as the engineered ones that remove their parents' flaws and provide useful traits such as seeing ultraviolet light.

Tackling complex concepts in straightforward language ("No one consents to existing"), the Does explain that their children were conceived in love, encourage them to be existentially aware, and recommend a non-religious, joy-focused worldview. They punctuate their lessons with clever poems referencing Occam's

razor, Plato's cave, and Fermi's paradox. Discussing possible solutions for overpopulation, they explicitly reject eugenics, instead advocating to "make access to genetic technology a universal human right," but readers may doubt that individuals choosing which traits to eliminate would be much improvement over authoritarian eugenics programs.

Those who read widely and are acquainted with the philosophical and scientific concepts underpinning this story will have a leg up on enjoying it, but the conceit of the letter being written to young children makes it surprisingly accessible. The unusual concept, epistolary form, and surprising playfulness of the writing result in something special, perfect for both casual reading and philosophy classroom discussion.

Great for fans of
Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*,
Nancy Kress's *Beggars in Spain*, Neal
Shusterman's *Unwind*
Dystology.

Production gradesCover: **C+**Design & typography: **C+**Illustrations: **-**Editing: **A+**Marketing copy: **B**

BUSINESS

Target Operating Model 2025**Randall Scott Rogers |**

Henosis Partners

116 pages, trade paper, \$17.95, ISBN 978-0-9841251-3-5

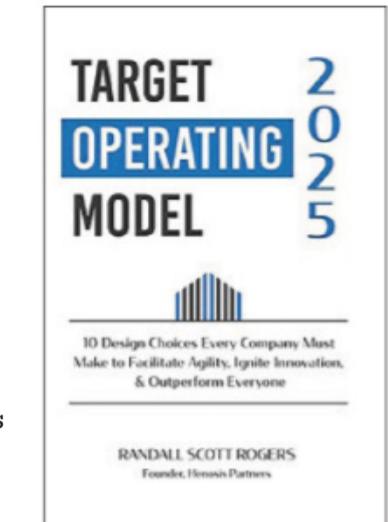
In this slim but information-packed overview of business management best practices, Rogers (*Only 1 Shot: Aligning the Inner Soul with Action*), founder of management consulting firm Henosis

Partners, shares the wisdom he's gained from working with dozens of companies in various industries. Adopting a no-nonsense tone, Rogers states that bigger isn't better; fragmented companies are vulnerable, not flexible; and there is no silver bullet or one-size-fits-all business approach. Having slain those sacred cows, he outlines 10 target operating models, or organizational design choices, that are intended to keep businesses alive and well. These touch on a wide range of topics, including office layout, data analysis, and diverse hiring.

Referencing several once-thriving companies now fallen on hard times, Rogers pulls no punches as he scolds business owners who mistake fads for innovation and focus on short-term performance to the detriment of long-term value creation. Though he frequently talks about the importance of innovation, most of his recommendations are solidly middle-of-the-road: developing personal relationships, building quiet rooms where people can think clearly, trusting employees to do their jobs. Most intriguing is his chapter on how to listen mindfully and make space for uncomfortable but necessary change. Barebones full-page diagrams illustrate several points and are suited to being photocopied and handed out at meetings.

Results-focused executives in need of direction will benefit from Rogers's firm guidance back to basic business principles.

Great for fans of
Tom Peters, Peter
Senge.

Production gradesCover: **C**Design & typography: **B**Illustrations: **B**Editing: **B+**Marketing copy: **B+**

10 Design Choices Every Company Must Make to Facilitate Agility, Ignite Innovation, & Outperform Everyone

RANDALL SCOTT ROGERS
Founder, Henosis Partners

The following are reviews of self-published titles that have previously appeared in PW

Fiction

The Civil War at Home

Dustin McKissen. Working Class, \$9.99 trade paper (224p) ISBN 978-1-7327693-2-8

A toxic bubble of tension and rage brews in McKissen's noisy tale of disastrously mismatched neighbors (after *The Poor* and *The Haunted*). In first-person narratives, the members of two married couples in a suburb of an unnamed Midwestern city reflect on how their experiences shaped their political beliefs. After a racist joke costs Trump-supporting Rick Sullivan his job, Rick keeps his wife, Kate, a teacher, in the dark about the details of his firing, along with his suicidal depression, and Kate stands by him. Their liberal neighbor, Kevin Harrison, a marketing consultant, is married to Marina, a third-generation Mexican-American homemaker. The members of each couple remain ignorant about the others' backgrounds (Kevin grew up poor and abused; Marina was not an illegal immigrant), and they make assumptions based on political and religious affiliations. The neighbors maintain a semblance of civility until they take to Facebook, where Rick calls Kevin an "overeducated privileged liberal" and Kevin calls Rick a "knuckle-dragging conservative Jesus-freak." Their mutual resentment leads to an alarming, blood-soaked conclusion. While the language the neighbors employ draws on broad stereotypes, McKissen finds humor and surprising depth in their antics. McKissen's harrowing tragedy of misunderstanding and personal turmoil makes for a powder keg of a page-turner.

Dead Week: A Cassandra Sato Mystery

Kelly Brakenhoff. Emerald Prairie, \$12.99 trade paper (322p) ISBN 978-1-733742-42-9

In Brakenhoff's straightforward second Cassandra Sato mystery (after 2019's *Death by Dissertation*), Cassandra, the vice president of student affairs at Nebraska's Morton College, has to deal with more than one difficult situation. Morton's Dead Week—the week right before finals that's intended as a "period of substantial and predictable QUIET study time"—may be disrupted by

plans by some deaf students to launch a protest over what they think is inadequate accommodation by the college administration, including a possible hunger strike and class boycotts. Meanwhile, Rachel Nagle, who was one of the students contemplating protests, is injured after someone pushes her down on the ice, but she has trouble getting people to believe it wasn't an accident. Cassandra's sleuthing reveals a possible connection between the attack on Rachel and an older crime. Brakenhoff integrates very real concerns about how to make a college campus truly inclusive into a diverting whodunit. Fans of Jane Langton's Homer Kelly books will be pleased.

To Dance in the Glen

Michelle Deerwester-Dalrymple. Michelle Deerwester-Dalrymple, \$12.99 trade paperback (278p) ISBN 978-0-359-05246-2

Deerwester-Dalrymple debuts with a pleasant, if conventional, tale of love and war in 14th-century Scotland, the first in her Glen Highland Romance series. When Meg Lachlan, a poor but courageous crofter's daughter, is harassed by a gang of marauding Englishmen, she's grateful to be rescued by several young Scotsmen. Then she learns that one of her rescuers is Ewan MacLeod, son of the local laird. Meg knows Ewan's reputation for seduction and makes it clear she intends to maintain her virtue. But Ewan, whose mother was raped and murdered by the English, feels responsible for Meg's safety and, despite their differing social ranks, soon falls in love. Unbeknownst to both of them, the English are blackmailing Meg's father for the coastal access afforded by the MacLeods' otherwise modest lands. Ewan and Meg marry, throwing Meg into grave danger as the English view her as a useful tool to manipulate the MacLeods. When Meg is inevitably kidnapped, Ewan must save his new wife and, in the process, avenge his mother. Though the plot is pedestrian and the language often anachronistic ("Can't ye shut up and let me think?"), Meg and Ewan make an appealing couple. Fans of May McGoldrick and Amanda Scott will enjoy this entertaining Highland romance.

★ They Don't Make Plus Size Spacesuits

Ali Thompson. Ali Thompson, \$2.99 e-book (62p) ISBN 978-0-578-50138-3

This short but razor-sharp debut collection of five dystopian tales of fatphobia is a deeply emotional battle cry. Kicking off with "Fat the Future," an impassioned essay about the erasure and condemnation of fat bodies in science fiction, these pieces range from intimate looks at their protagonists' personal lives to larger commentary on the way the world treats fat people. "I'm Not Sorry," which reads like an episode of Black Mirror, paints a discomforting portrait of a future where fat people must "volunteer" to get implants that monitor their activity and blood sugar in order to keep their jobs and partake in everyday activities like entering coffee shops. In the powerful "Nothing Left to Burn," a young woman endures emotional and physical abuse at the hands of her mother who will stop at nothing to keep her daughter from growing taller, forcing her to try pills and experimental surgeries. Though the dystopian horrors of many of these stories can feel extreme, Thompson sends the collection out on an optimistic note in "We Shall All Be Healed, at Last, at Last," about a budding rebellion among the fat citizens of the oppressive planet Utopia. This heartfelt, empathetic collection is a knockout.

Heroines of Avalon & Other Tales

Ayn Cates Sullivan. Infinite Light, \$26.95 (258p) ISBN 978-1-947925-04-5

Sullivan's passionate follow-up to *Legends of the Grail* explores women's spirituality through retellings of six goddess tales from the King Arthur legend, among them mother goddess Arianrhod, independent Elen, and Dindraine, the "first person to achieve the Holy Grail." Sullivan provides a breakdown of the symbolism, origin, and lineage of each story; includes her own short stories and poems that capture each goddess's spiritual allure; and recaps their mythological lore. She then instructs women in ways to celebrate each goddess with rituals and meditation-esque visualizations intended to forge a spiritual connection between reader and goddess.

Particularly enchanting is Sullivan's section on "Ladies of the Lake"—Elaine and Nimue, goddesses of beauty and the moon, who serve as stewards into the ethereal realm—which provides visualizations and rituals meant to help readers attain greater "bodily awareness" and self-sufficiency. This approachable guide will be valuable to those interested in "goddess lore."

★ **The Lost Letter**

Mimi Matthews. Perfectly Proper, \$3.99
e-book (244p) ISBN 978-0-9990364-0-2

Lost love letters, lies, and betrayals separate a soldier from the woman he loves in this gripping, emotional Victorian romance from Matthews (the Parish Orphans of Devon series). Sebastian Conrad returns to the English countryside from India following the rebellion of 1857, covered in scars, wracked with night terrors, and convinced that Sylvia Stafford, the woman he loves, no longer loves him back. Why else would she have halted their correspondence while he was abroad? Before Sebastian left for India, Sylvia was a naive romantic, but in the three years since she last saw or heard from him, life has been cruel to the former baroness. Her father's gambling addiction and suicide left her penniless, alone, and stripped of her title. Now Sebastian and Sylvia's differing social ranks and years of misunderstandings stand in the way of their happiness, but Julia Harker, Conrad's sprightly, nosey, and delightfully dramatic younger sister, is determined to bring them back together. The chemistry between these star-crossed lovers is undeniable, and Matthews imbues their sweeping romance with just the right amount of period detail to make the setting come alive. Historical romance fans should snap this one up.

Saving Calypso

Dawn Z. Church. Bodie Blue, \$12.50 trade paper (324p) ISBN 978-0-9983297-6-5

In the tantalizing prologue of this twisty thriller from Church (*Head First*), the enigmatic Calypso Swale decides to leave her home for the second time in six months after she spots ads describing her as a "missing heiress" in local newspapers and some men watching her on the street. Calypso drives from San Francisco to the Sierra National Forest, where she pushes her car off a moun-

tain road to create the illusion that she died in an accident. Flash forward four years. In Kenya, Grieg Washburn learns that his father, Ray, has been blown up by a bomb in Syria. At the reading of Ray's will, a lawyer reminds Grieg that he was convicted of vehicular manslaughter five years earlier, but thanks to Ray cutting a deal with the judge, he served only probation instead of prison time. While driving drunk, Grieg collided with another car, killing Calypso's mother and seriously injuring her father. After Calypso visited her father in the hospital, he warned her to run, triggering her life as a fugitive. Readers will keep turning the pages to see what brings Calypso and Grieg together in the present day. Lisa Unger fans will be pleased.

A Season of Sons (Black Spiral #1)

Rob Tucker. Tell-Tale, \$25 trade paper (398p)
ISBN 978-1-944056-86-5

At the start of Tucker's arresting series launch, Rev. Lawrence Livingston, who has devoted himself to "encouraging and promoting the acceptance and value of all religions," is murdered in a New York City church by Antonio Guzman, a Georgetown University graduate raised by Jesuit priests, who injects the cleric with a drug before slicing open his abdomen with a machete. Guzman then masturbates with Livingston's blood and ejaculates over the altar Bible, leaving a DNA sample that contains a dark, third spiral helix. FBI agent Leon Safullo investigates the bizarre crime, which is made even odder by Guzman having somehow removed any traces of blood from the scene. The plot thickens after Guzman emails the media and claims he resides "in the dark spaces of the universe. By putting a biological life form to death, I cause the vibration of energy, atoms, and the soul is set free. Lawrence Livingston is now one of us." Tucker keeps the pages turning. This paranormal serial killer thriller isn't for the faint of heart, though Blake Crouch fans may be intrigued.

Singapore Fling

Maida Malby. EOT, \$12.99 trade paper (268p)
ISBN 978-0-9995432-3-8

Passion burns hot on a Singapore vacation in the sizzling second romance of Malby's *Carpe Diem Chronicles* (after

Boracay Vows). Two months earlier, French-Filipina businesswoman Maddie Duvall enjoyed a steamy encounter with American Lt. Col. Aidan Ryan, air attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Singapore, while he was visiting the Philippines. Neither has been able to stop thinking about it since. Now Aidan's brother is marrying Maddie's best friend, and their destination wedding in Singapore brings the pair back together. This time, Maddie and Ryan plan to test whether their connection goes beyond physical attraction by moving in together while they hammer out wedding plans. But when Maddie reunites with her father, a crooked French diplomat, Ryan questions her allegiances and Maddie worries about Ryan's motives for getting close to her in the first place. Malby maintains the sexual tension throughout, punctuating it with high-intensity erotic encounters. The enticing Singapore backdrop and hints of international intrigue add depth to this spicy tale. Romance fans with wanderlust will be especially delighted.

The Trumpet Lesson

Dianne Romain. She Writes, \$16.95 trade paper (336p) ISBN 978-1-63-152598-8

Romain's enchanting debut delves into the complex personalities of two friends living in the mountains of central Mexico. Callie Quinn is an anxiety-ridden expatriate American nearing 50, and Armando García is a vivacious 30-year-old orchestral musician. Both are transplants in Guanajuato; Armando settled in the town to be near his mentor, the local symphony conductor, and Callie, who works as a Spanish and French translator of technical documents, decided to buy a house there after visiting the town's museum. After Armando hears about Callie's translation skills, he requests help from her with French grammar to better correspond with his French lover. Armando is consumed by worries about his missing dog and long-distance relationship, while Callie works to build a serene new life amid painful memories from her early years. Callie is a stabilizing force in Armando's life, and his charisma helps her confront her debilitating shyness and its quirky manifestations, such as her habit of mentally alphabetizing her seasonings when she's stressed. Armando arranges trumpet lessons

for Callie, and playing the instrument provides her with some relief ("It was addictive, that sensation of resonance"). Romain's insights into the characters' flaws enrich this story of friendship, along with prose that is sometimes droll, often fervent, and always engrossing. This is worth a look.

Wishful Thinking

Helen Harper. *Harperfire*, \$14.99 trade paper (270p) ISBN 978-1-913116-22-4

The humorous first urban fantasy in Harper's *How to Be the Best Damn Faery Godmother in the World (or Die Trying)* series introduces an enchanting world where faeries work in a cutthroat corporate hierarchy. Spunky Saffron Sawyer is the best dope faery in England, using her talents to give clients magical "happy drug dreams," but she's always aspired to join the renowned ranks of the Faery Godmothers. After she's invited to be a Godmother out of the blue (after applying and being rejected several times), bullies, brown-nosers, and an authoritarian Director make her life in the stuffy office miserable. When Saffron learns that someone is kidnapping Godmothers and mailing their body parts to the office, she realizes she was only hired to be bait for the kidnappers. Drawing on her street smarts, drug-world connections, and tenacity, she rallies her reluctant office mates into action to rescue the missing Godmothers—but first she must grant a wish to her client, a teenage boy looking for his birth father. Harper (the *Blood Destiny* series) delights with a quick-thinking heroine, an alluring love interest in the form of the Devil's Advocate (the most powerful faery in England), playful worldbuilding, and slapstick comedy. Readers are sure to be charmed.

in an age of mass surveillance. Looking at how companies can deliver privacy and security along with convenience, Trepp identifies five rules for CEOs to follow, including training their personnel in privacy matters, adopting policies to ensure responsible data handling, giving customers a right to unenrollment, enforcing company self-regulation, and fostering a culture of transparency. His examination centers heavily on facial recognition software, which, he argues based on his experience in the field, can be far less intrusive than critics claim if responsible guidelines are adopted by the industry and by government regulators. He touches on social media platforms, noting Snapchat's "success has much to do with privacy" measures taken by the company, and also takes a prescient look forward at personal identification management, biometric legislation, and government surveillance, closing with a series of discussion questions to which experts in the field offer their opinions. Trepp's thoughtful analysis of how online privacy matters will shape commerce and the world is one business leaders will be wise to note.

Nonfiction

The New Rules of Consumer Privacy: Building Loyalty with Connected Consumers in the Age of Face Recognition and AI

Peter Trepp. *FaceFirst*, \$16.99 trade paper (208p) ISBN 978-1-72882-736-0

Trepp, CEO of FaceFirst, a facial recognition technology company, devotes this discerning and revealing work to privacy issues

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"The inventiveness you bring to your book project can be applied to raising financial support for its completion."

Inventing Your Advance

An author offers up sources writers can tap to help finance their next books

BY VANESSA BLAKESLEE

Funding a book-length project, whether it's a first book or a fourth, can be challenging—even more so without an advance, or with a nominal one. However, with some research, organization, entrepreneurial spirit, and persistence, a writer at any career stage can find resources to "invent" an advance and obtain the support to complete a manuscript. Below are some options writers can look to.

- If you're working on a first book, the Elizabeth George Foundation provides one-time yearlong grants. Funds may be used for living expenses, travel for research, artistic residencies, writers conferences, necessary enrichment or related coursework, or tuition in accredited MFA programs in the U.S. Short story writers, poets, unpublished novelists, emerging playwrights, and unpublished creative nonfiction writers who are U.S. residents may apply.
- The Sustainable Arts Foundation supports writers who are parents by giving unrestricted cash awards to individuals as well as by funding family-friendly artist residencies. Recent individual awardees received \$5,000 each.
- For creative writing projects with an international focus, the Fulbright Awards considers and funds both teaching/research and research awards. If you have a BA or are a recent graduate, you'll likely want to apply under the Fulbright Student Program; graduate-degree holders who have been published will likely apply under the Fulbright Scholar Program for mid-career and established professionals. Many countries do not have a foreign language requirement, so you may undertake your book project research in English. For some awards, the Fulbright now offers a "flex option," which means if you are granted that award (either for a semester or full academic year abroad), you may allocate the research over shorter time periods.
- If you're the adventurous type, perhaps consider volunteering for the Peace Corps. While this experience isn't for everyone, I've met several writers who have mined their experience as Peace Corps volunteers for both fiction and nonfiction books upon their return. Though many perceive the Peace Corps as a venture undertaken in youth, that simply isn't true—many have volunteered later in life, postretirement, or as a "gap year" after a divorce, loss, or similar reboot. You'll have to embrace learning a new language



and culture for the months you're deployed, but you won't have to worry about living expenses or student loan payments for that time—and you might just encounter a gripping story that demands to be told.

● If you're a historical writer working on a subject in America pre-1830, the Hodson Trust-John Carter Brown Library Fellowship supports two months

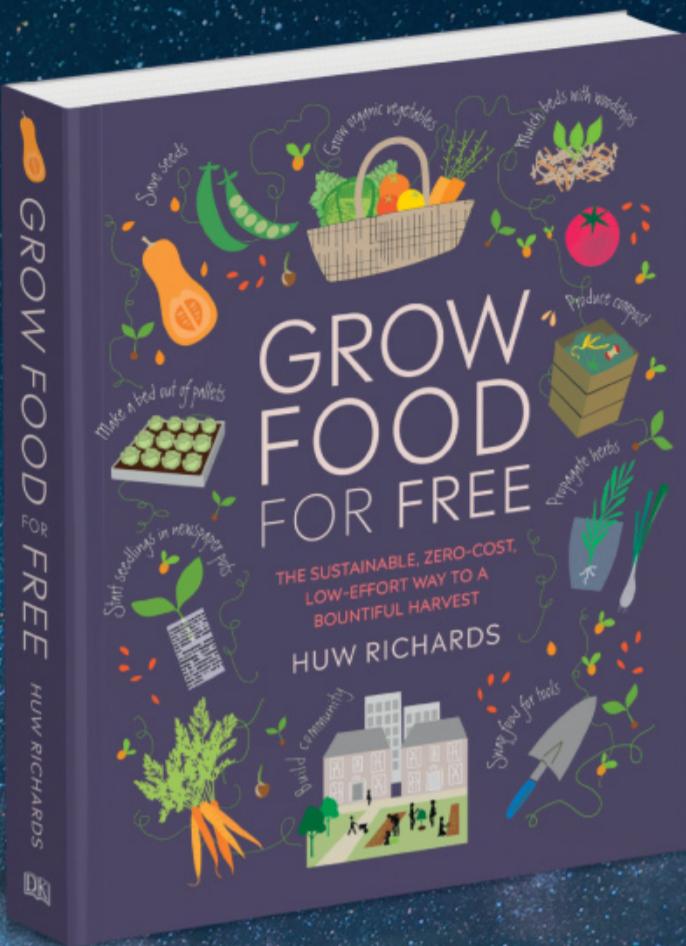
of research and two months of writing. The stipend is \$5,000 per month for a total of \$20,000, plus housing and university privileges. The research is conducted at the John Carter Brown Library on the campus of Brown University in Providence, R.I. The two-month writing period of the fellowship will be at the Starr Center at Washington College in Chestertown, Md., during the summer following the research term.

● If you're able to work remotely or get away, seek out writing residencies that offer a stipend. The Jack Kerouac Writers-in-Residence Project of Orlando offers a three-month stay in the Florida bungalow where Kerouac wrote *The Dharma Bums* and includes \$1,000. Other residencies offer similar fellowship awards and stipends, such as the Mastheads (\$900 stipend), Soaring Gardens/Ora Lerman Trust (\$500 stipend), Headlands (\$500), Newnan ArtRez (varies), and others. Check the Alliance of Artist Communities database, prioritize your list, and apply.

● CrowdFund, crowdfund, crowdfund. Whether one likes it or not, we now live in a Kickstarter, GoFundMe, and Indiegogo world. The great news is that crowdfunding provides a great tool to match funds as you invent your advance. Asking backers to support you for a year to pen your novel would truly be a tough sell, even for a well-respected and popular writer—but if you've already secured some funding elsewhere, your crowdfunding "ask" to match funds should be much easier. Since many residencies are unable to provide travel expenses or child care, you might use a crowdfunding platform to fill in the gaps on your invented advance.

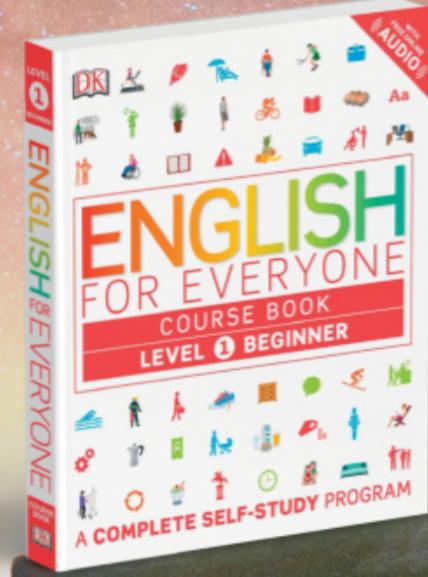
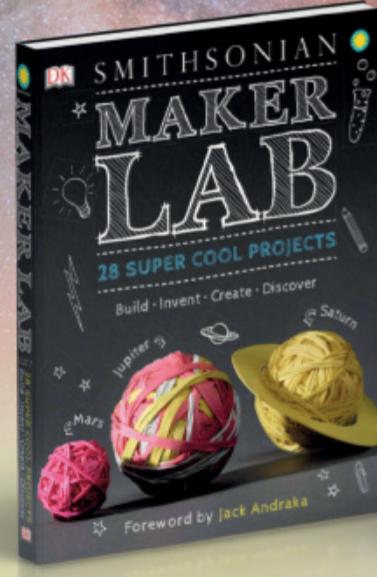
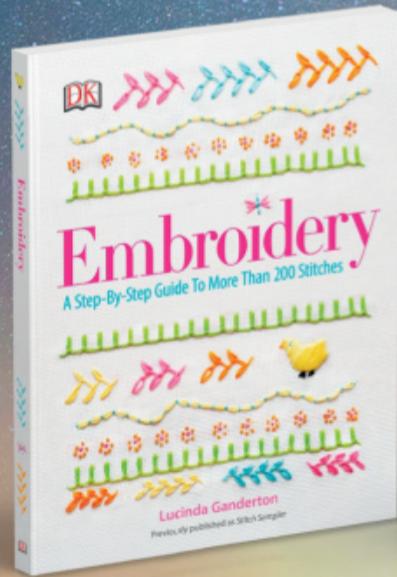
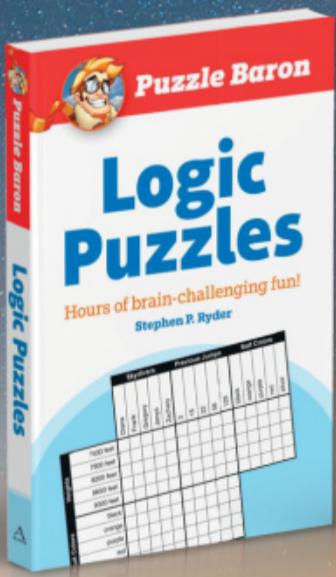
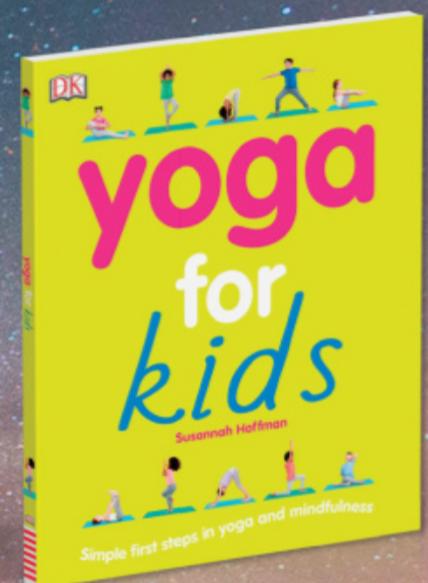
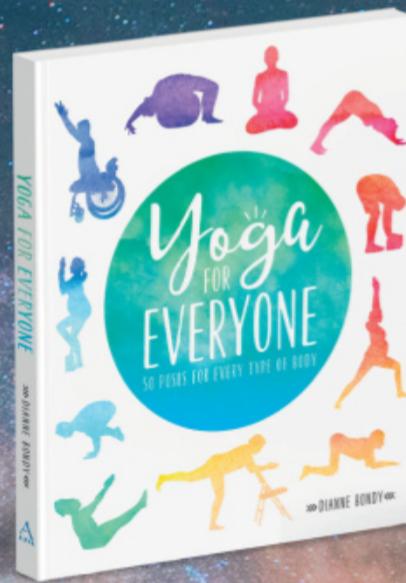
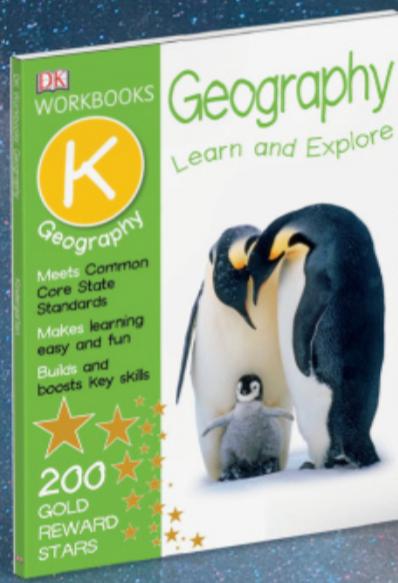
No two writers' circumstances are exactly alike, and some of these avenues may appeal more than others. But by increasing your awareness of the funding options available, the inventiveness you bring to your book project can be applied to raising financial support for its completion, no matter where you are in your literary career. Hopefully you'll meet your project goals sooner than later—with the focus on your creative vision, independent of a publisher's advance. ■

Vanessa Blakeslee's most recent book, Perfect Conditions, was named the 2018 gold Forward Indies winner for short stories by Foreword Reviews.



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